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**OVERSIGHT OF FAMILY SUPPORT
PROGRAMS**

HEARING

BEFORE THE

MILITARY PERSONNEL SUBCOMMITTEE

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED ELEVENTH CONGRESS

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OVERSIGHT OF FAMILY SUPPORT PROGRAMS

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
MILITARY PERSONNEL SUBCOMMITTEE,
Washington, DC, Wednesday, July 22, 2009.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to call, at 2:01 p.m., in room 2212, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Susan Davis (chairwoman of the subcommittee) presiding.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. SUSAN A. DAVIS, A REPRESENTATIVE FROM CALIFORNIA, CHAIRWOMAN, MILITARY PERSONNEL SUBCOMMITTEE

Mrs. DAVIS. Good afternoon. Our hearing will come to order.

I want to welcome all our witnesses. Today, we will turn our attention on the multitude of family support programs within the Services and the Department of Defense (DOD).

While we have focused on several of these issues in the past, this is the first subcommittee hearing in over a decade that will solely focus on family support programs that are so important and vital to our military families during these challenging times.

The burden of eight years of conflict have not only fallen on our servicemembers. A large portion of that burden has also fallen on their families, as well. And, unfortunately, their plight is often overshadowed.

While the majority of Americans have been outstanding in their support of our men and women in uniform, sadly, the majority of military families in a recent survey revealed about 94 percent of military families felt that the average American does not understand the sacrifices these families are making.

The toll is especially significant on those most vulnerable: our military children. The number of military children who are seeking mental health care since the start of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) has more than doubled. And many children are being forced to wait months to receive treatment because access to care is not sufficient.

However, mental health is just one area where there are challenges. As we have found, there are issues that affect servicemembers going through the deployment process, pre-, during and post-deployment. And while their issues are slightly different, military families face their own set of hurdles during each phase, as well, and it is our responsibility to ensure that we work to address these issues and support our families as we do our men and women in uniform.

I do not mean to imply at all that nothing has been done for families. Quite the contrary, the Services and the Department have un-

dertaken significant effort—extraordinary in many cases—to improve programs and assistance for military families.

But there is more that can and must be done to support all of those who defend our Nation, and that includes our military families.

Today, we have asked the senior enlisted representatives from each of the Services to be with us. As the eyes and ears of their individual force, they know and understand what is happening on the ground level.

We have also asked a representative from Reserve Affairs to be here to provide the perspective of the unique challenges Reserve and National Guard families face, as well as a representative from the Department who is responsible for all of these programs.

So let me introduce our witnesses.

Mr. Art Myers, principal director military community and family policy, Office of the Secretary of Defense, Personnel and Readiness, welcome.

Colonel Cory Lyman, assistant director, individual and family support policy, Office of the Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs.

Sergeant Major Kenneth Preston, sergeant major of the Army.

Sergeant Major Carlton Kent, sergeant major of the Marine Corps.

And Master Chief Petty Officer Rick West, master chief petty officer of the Navy.

And Chief Master Sergeant James Roy, chief master sergeant of the Air Force.

Gentlemen, welcome. We are very pleased that you are here.

I will ask you to testify in the order that I just introduced you. And without objection, all written statements will be included in the record. Thank you once again for being here today, and we look forward to a very productive hearing.

[The prepared statement of Mrs. Davis can be found in the Appendix on page 35.]

Mrs. DAVIS. Mr. Wilson, do you have any comments?

STATEMENT OF HON. JOE WILSON, A REPRESENTATIVE FROM SOUTH CAROLINA, RANKING MEMBER, MILITARY PERSONNEL SUBCOMMITTEE

Mr. WILSON. Thank you, Chairwoman Davis, for holding this hearing. And thank you to each of our—today's panel.

And I am particularly pleased to see the senior enlisted personnel from the Services, and I know that one of my sons is a doctor in the Navy, and I am very grateful that he has provided for his chief noncommissioned officer (NCO) at the Portsmouth Naval Hospital to now be an intern in our office this month. So we appreciate what—what you do for our country.

Meeting the needs of military families has never been more challenging or complex. We are a Nation at war, fighting on two fronts, and the strains of those wars translate directly and immediately to the families of the members of the Armed Forces.

When you disrupt the military family unit by deploying a key member of that family, a host of issues arise that stress all aspects

of family life: economic, physical, and mental health, personal finances, interpersonal relationships, and many more areas.

This subcommittee, the Department of Defense, and the military services have taken any number of initiatives to address the needs of military families. During my 31 years of service with the Army Reserve and Army National Guard as a legal assistance Judge Advocate General (JAG), I conducted pre-mobilization legal counseling and will preparation statewide.

I appreciate what efforts have been made for military families, which I know firsthand as a veteran and as the grateful father of four sons currently serving in the military.

Yet, despite all that has been accomplished, there remains evidence that the family support system may not be completely effective. While I know that the Department of Defense and the military services are committed to assisting and supporting military families, I am not convinced that the provision of those services is fully coordinated and integrated.

So I am interested in hearing from our witnesses as to how effective the coordination and integration is. Also, I am interested in hearing where we must provide additional effort in the form of policy or resources to improve what already is being done.

With that, Madam Chairwoman, I join you in welcoming our witnesses, and I look forward to their testimony.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Wilson can be found in the Appendix on page 38.]

Mrs. DAVIS. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Wilson.

I believe that we had asked our witnesses if they could try and condense their remarks into about three minutes, then that will allow for a lot of dialogue between the members and yourselves. I would appreciate that.

So without objection, I ask unanimous consent that the written testimony from the Fleet Reserve Association (FRA) be included in the record, and we are delighted to begin.

[The information referred to can be found in the Appendix on page 135.]

Mrs. DAVIS. Mr. Myers, would you please proceed, Mr. Myers.

**STATEMENT OF ARTHUR J. MYERS, PRINCIPAL DIRECTOR
MILITARY COMMUNITY AND FAMILY POLICY, UNDER SEC-
RETARY OF DEFENSE, PERSONNEL AND READINESS, U.S. DE-
PARTMENT OF DEFENSE**

Mr. MYERS. Chairwoman Davis, Representative Wilson, and distinguished members of the subcommittee, the Secretary of Defense and all the men and women of the Armed Forces, as well as their families, thank you for your strong support. We are very appreciative that you are holding this hearing.

Our Military OneSource program is well tailored for its individually tailored services and its availability anytime from any place, which is particularly helpful for those who are geographically isolated from installation support.

This program offers face-to-face non-medical counseling for military members and their families experiencing the normal stress of multiple deployments and reunions, as well as financial assistance and health and wellness coaching.

Additionally, we have placed military family life consultants in schools, selected by the military departments, to provide consultation, education, training and workshops to faculty, parents and children to help cope with deployments. We now have 399 military life consultants at our childcare and youth programs and summer camps.

We are also assisting spouses to develop portable careers by offering military spouse career advancement accounts for credentialing and licensure. This initiative began in March, and already 34,000 military spouses have established accounts, and almost half who have started training are seeking careers in health professions.

We appreciate the Congress's focus on military families who have children with autism. However, we need your support to expand this attention to all military families with special needs, not only those with autism.

Military families with special needs encounter multiple challenges navigating the maze of health care, education, and community support services they face each time they move. Several years ago, the Congress granted temporary authority for minor military construction of child development centers that allowed us to accelerate childcare capacity and increase spaces by 15,000 on a rapid basis.

To meet our goals for childcare and to keep our members fit to fight and win, we require a similar authority for fitness centers and family centers and for childcare for children through 12 years of age. We need to extend the authority which ends this fiscal year through fiscal year 2012 and also increase the project threshold to \$15 million.

In addition, we need to eliminate the barriers to our partnerships with military community providers of childcare, such as relief from the Service Contract Act. Your staff has been very supportive of these initiatives and has contacted the committees with oversight of these areas for assistance.

We appreciate your concern about ensuring continuity on program delivery and your understanding of our efforts and importance of moving the overseas contingency operations funding into the baseline funding budget.

Thank you again for your strong support of the military members and their families. Those of you who are members of the Baby and Children Caucuses further represent the best interests and needs of all military children. I will be happy to respond to any of your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Myers can be found in the Appendix on page 39.]

Mrs. DAVIS. Thank you very much.

Colonel Lyman.

STATEMENT OF COL. CORY LYMAN, USAF, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, INDIVIDUAL AND FAMILY SUPPORT POLICY, OFFICE OF SECRETARY OF DEFENSE RESERVE AFFAIRS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

Colonel LYMAN. Chairwoman Davis, Congressman Wilson, and members of the subcommittee, thank you for your invitation to dis-

cuss the status of family programs from the Reserve Affairs perspective.

National Guard and Reserve members and their families are geographically dispersed throughout America's communities. They have unique issues and opportunities. The Department is committed to support Reserve members and their families through policies that maintain strong family programs and through innovative efforts, such as the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program.

Great responsibilities have been placed on the shoulders of Guard and Reserve members and their families. On behalf of the Department of Defense, I express deep appreciation for the unflagging support given by this committee to the care and the support of dedicated and patriotic Reserve Component members and to their marvelous families who also serve and sacrifice.

Reserve Component families address family needs—excuse me. Reserve Component family programs address family needs that differ in meaningful ways from active component families. For instance, Guard and Reserve families are community-based and connected. They are also dispersed geographically across some 4,000 communities nationwide. These realities create challenges and also offer great opportunities to link with community resources.

To help Reserve Component members through the deployment cycle, the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program was developed. This program is focused on the Reserve Component member, and it works hand in hand with the family program to enhance family readiness, and it helps to smooth many of the potential challenges of military deployments.

The Department is committed to the success of this Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program, and we appreciate this committee's continued support of this visionary program.

We will continue to collaborate with the many agencies and programs that help deliver critical family programs and Yellow Ribbon resources to every Guard and Reserve member and their family members nationwide. And, again, we are grateful for your essential interest and support.

And I look forward to answering your questions.

[The prepared statement of Colonel Lyman can be found in the Appendix on page 66.]

Mrs. DAVIS. Thank you very much.

Sergeant Major Preston.

**STATEMENT OF SGT. MAJ. KENNETH O. PRESTON, USA,
SERGEANT MAJOR OF THE ARMY**

Sergeant Major PRESTON. Chairwoman Davis, Representative Wilson, committee members, thank you for the opportunity to sit before you today and represent the men and women of America's Army.

On behalf of more than 1.1 million men and women serving in the Army and their 814,000 family members, I want to thank you for your support. This committee has and continues to take care of our All-Volunteer Force who serve our Nation with loyalty, pride and honor.

I have brought three soldiers with me today to help answer your questions and to further help you help our warriors and their families.

First, the command sergeant major for the Army Reserve, Command Sergeant Major Leon Caffie, who serves as the senior enlisted adviser for Lieutenant General Jack C. Stultz, the chief of the Army Reserve.

The interim command sergeant major for the Army National Guard, Command Sergeant Major Victor Angry, who serves as the senior enlisted adviser for the acting director of the Army National Guard, Major General Raymond Carpenter.

These two command sergeant majors represent more than 560,000 soldiers and their families in the Army National Guard and the Army Reserve.

I also have with me Sergeant Joel Dulashanti, who hails from Cincinnati, Ohio. Sergeant Dulashanti is 22 years old and enlisted in the Army in 2005. He deployed to Afghanistan along the Pakistan border in January of 2007. He performed operations as a sniper out of several forward operating bases, including Salerno, Tillman, and Warrior.

On the 4th of May, 2007, he was caught in an ambush during a recon and was shot through both his left and right knees and his stomach. He is an above-the-knee amputee on his right leg, and he now works in the office of the legislative liaison, and he hangs out with me when I get the chance to come over here to Capitol Hill.

The mission of the Army is to fight and win our Nation's wars. Today, the American soldier brings unmatched skills in defending our Nation and our allies around the world. We currently have more than 260,000 soldiers currently forward deployed to 80 countries around the world. The large majority of these soldiers are forward-deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan in brigade combat teams, multifunctional brigades, functional brigades, and other force-enabling units.

Additionally, 260,000 Army civilians are performing critical missions in support of the Army.

During the past year, I traveled to visit, speak and listen to soldiers and their families all over the world. Soldiers and family members routinely list access to quality medical care as their biggest concern. One of the major accessibility challenges to getting quality medical care is finding sufficient health care providers outside our military installations who accept TRICARE payment. As one health care provider said, "I take TRICARE cases out of charity to help the Services."

Limited numbers of health care providers especially hurt our soldiers and families in geographically dispersed locations. While TRICARE is meeting their established standards for care available, I recommend a review of those standards to ensure they meet the needs of soldiers and families serving today at a higher operational pace.

In closing, the centerpiece of our commitment to soldiers and their families is the Army Family Covenant, which we launched in October of 2007, and the Army Community Covenant, which we launched in 2008. Both of these initiatives institutionalize and fund the programs supporting our soldiers and their families with the

support that is commensurate to the quality service they provide to the Nation.

Madam Chairwoman Davis, committee members, thank you. And I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Sergeant Major Preston can be found in the Appendix on page 74.]

Mrs. DAVIS. Thank you.

And I also want to thank the soldiers who have accompanied you today. And we look forward, if you would like to say something, to respond to our questions, we would welcome that. Thank you.

Sergeant Major Kent.

**STATEMENT OF SGT. MAJ. CARLTON W. KENT, USMC,
SERGEANT MAJOR OF THE MARINE CORPS**

Sergeant Major KENT. Madam Chairwoman, Ranking Member Wilson, and the distinguished members of the subcommittee, thank you for this opportunity to report on the status of our family support programs that affect the quality of life and the well-beings of our Marines and families.

As I travel around to see our units, both—they are deployed and at home stations, I continue to find highly motivated and dedicated warriors who know that they are doing important work for our Nation.

The Marines are fighting our Nation's battles on all fronts, to include, you know, deployed aboard naval vessels and at every U.S. embassy throughout the world. They are truly living up to our motto of "semper fidelis," always faithful, to our Nation and our corps.

They also know that the Nation loves them and supports them. They also know that the family support programs that we speak about today is evidence of your continued support to our Marines who are in a high operational tempo. These programs are critical to addressing the quality-of-life needs of our families.

I firmly believe that the well-being of the Marines and their families have an impact on the readiness and the retention of our corps.

The rigors of military life are challenging to the Marines, especially to their families, who have to cope with separations, relocations, and sometimes isolations. These stresses are heightened during wartime and compounded by the Nation's issues, such as the state of our economy.

The commandant has stated that Marines and our families have a reasonable expectation that the corps and the Nation will take care of them, and we continue to ensure that we live up to that commitment.

In support of these programs is to provide the Marines and our families certain things to overcome the challenges that they face each and every day.

Thank you for the long-lasting support, and I would be happy to answer any questions.

[The prepared statement of Sergeant Major Kent can be found in the Appendix on page 88.]

Mrs. DAVIS. Thank you.

Master Chief Petty Officer West.

**STATEMENT OF MASTER CHIEF PETTY OFFICER RICK D.
WEST, USN, MASTER CHIEF PETTY OFFICER OF THE NAVY**

Master Chief Petty Officer WEST. Chairwoman Davis, Congressman Wilson, distinguished members of this committee, thank you for this opportunity to testify before you today. I consider this a distinct honor and privilege, not to mention one of the most important aspects of my position as a master chief petty officer in the Navy.

I, like you, understand and very much appreciate that there is a definite linkage between the safety, security, and well-being of our families and our services' ability to execute the mission.

Our family members, those men, women and children who support our sailors, are both brave and strong. They are resilient and resourceful. And without a doubt, they are as every bit as dedicated and patriotic as those of us that wear the cloth of our Nation.

They, more than anyone, fully understand that when their loved ones cross the bow of a Navy ship or deploys with one of our many units or squadrons, they become mom and dad, auto mechanic, handyman, and financial manager. Yet they and we often overlook is the fact that they are not alone.

There are a myriad of programs and personnel standing by to support, which is the focus of our discussion today. It is a function of leadership to ensure our families are given the kind of quality of service they deserve. Just as important, we must inform and educate them as to the resources that are available. In doing so, our sailors have piece of mind and the ability to focus on their job knowing their families are safe and secure.

We have programs in place that were created to assist our families in almost any situation. Through our fleet and family support centers—though our fleet and family support centers promote self-reliance, their cadre of outstanding staff personnel, along with our dedicated ombudsman, are at the ready to lend assistance or provide referral as needed. Each is engaged as I have ever seen.

It has been stressing to every level of Navy leadership—I have been stressing to every level of Navy leadership that we can't expect our Navy families to find out about these programs on their own. We have made great strides in improving our family programs, as well as communicating the efforts, yet there is still a great deal to be done.

We must continue to ensure that every family member knows where to find information about emergency preparedness and other programs that encourage family readiness.

Additionally, we often focus our efforts in fleet concentration areas. However, we must also be mindful of family members who depart or reside outside of these areas where traditionally sailors deploy, distancing themselves from the traditional means of Navy support. And I am confident that we are continuing to make improvements in these areas.

Madam Chairwoman, our families have learned to live with the anxiety of war and stress of the military lifestyle. We understand and accept it. But that doesn't mean leadership shouldn't continue to do whatever we can to lessen that stress, for I firmly believe that how we support the families of those we send into harm's way defines us as a Nation.

On behalf of our sailors and their families, I would like to thank you for the role each of you has and will continue to play in ensuring our Navy families are well supported and shown the level of appreciation they deserve.

[The prepared statement of Master Chief Petty Officer West can be found in the Appendix on page 110.]

Mrs. DAVIS. Thank you very much.

Chief Master Sergeant Roy.

And I want to thank you all for staying within that very short timeframe.

**STATEMENT OF CHIEF MASTER SGT. JAMES A. ROY, USAF,
CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT OF THE AIR FORCE**

Chief Master Sergeant ROY. Chairwoman Davis, Representative Wilson, members of this distinguished subcommittee, I appreciate very much the opportunity to speak with you today about the issues important to our airmen and their families.

I would like to first thank you, Chairwoman, and the members of this committee and the entire House of Representatives for the extensive support our airmen and their families receive from you. We especially thank you for your visits to our wounded warriors. Our wounded warriors and their families who support and care for them sacrifice much.

Our American airmen have answered our Nation's call. No matter whether they are deployed overseas in contingency operations or whether they are deployed in places as a stateside base in support of the combatant command's requirements, our airmen are doing an incredible job.

Their families also serve. They support and care for their own airmen, volunteering across the spectrum of support activities and—and comfort other members of their family who experience an often absent parent or spouse. Yes, our military families serve honorably.

Developing and caring for our airmen families are one of our top priorities. We have focused much on our efforts in this area. Some of our recent initiatives have concentrated on expanding childcare capacity, increasing childcare for Guard and Reserve families, improving financial readiness, and improving education and development opportunities for spouses and children.

Our airmen are experiencing an increased deployment schedule, so we are also providing an increased deployment support, not only for our airmen, but also specifically for family members. We offer programs and services across every phase of deployment.

We have more than 14,000 families with special needs requirements enrolled in our special needs program, the Exceptional Family Member Program. We have a good process for identifying families and facilitating personnel moves in assignments based on a special needs family requirement.

However, we have determined the need for a companion program to provide family support as they move from location to location. We are improving our program to assist these families.

We are also working to level the playing field of our military children who experience differences in academic standards and transfer and acceptance of course credits. We are also concerned with

viable elementary grade level promotions, graduation requirements, as well as eligibility in sports and extracurricular activity.

We are working with states to loosen up the eligibility of unemployment compensation for our military spouses who are compelled to leave their job and be with their airmen. We are working to provide opportunities to train and license in portable career fields to abbreviate the job search timeframe for their spouse.

We will remain engaged in our family support programs, and we plan to consistently improve these programs that we already have in effect.

Thank you again for your continued support of our United States Air Force. And on behalf of America's airmen and their families, we appreciate the opportunity to be here today.

I look forward to any of your questions.

[The prepared statement of Chief Master Sergeant Roy can be found in the Appendix on page 119.]

Mrs. DAVIS. Thank you. Thank you to all of you.

I wanted to start with the statistic that I gave at the beginning of my talk. And, quite frankly, when I was in a meeting with many, many different spouses representing a number of different organizations, they shared the statistic that 94 percent of the American people do not understand the sacrifices that they are making.

You have spoken about a number of initiatives that we have. And I applaud them, and I know the members of the committee do, as well. I mean, there has been tremendous progress made. And yet, you know, there is this sense.

And I wonder if you could just reflect on that. What do you think that represents? And what should we be doing, what should the Services be doing to perhaps change that feeling that somehow it is partly isolation and maybe there are—what do you think it reflects that so many of our families would feel that way, despite the fact that there are a number of initiatives that are there to help them and support them?

Mr. Myers, you want to start?

Mr. MYERS. Well, what I believe is, I think the American public, it focuses on the military, per se. You know, when Mrs. Obama, when during the campaign, we had a meeting in the White House, and she indicated to us, she went around and met with normal families, and these family members would tell them of the sacrifices, the things they have to do, because the economy and so—well, then she talked to a military spouse about not beside only that, they had these continued deployments and so forth.

So she didn't realize that the military family faced that many challenges. When I was in military, I did all my tours in Vietnam. I can tell you, there was hardly any focus on families. And I remember in Vietnam—when we left Vietnam, we went back, there was not the support we have today.

So I think, little by little, people are becoming aware of, it is just not the military member that serves. It is the entire, entire family. And I think it is catching on, but we have a long way to go.

But having these type hearings, having Mrs. Obama, Dr. Biden, and so forth talking about it, I think people are starting to get educated and understand the sacrifices our military members and their families make.

Mrs. DAVIS. Anybody else like to comment?

Colonel LYMAN. I would make a comment, ma'am. I believe that the Guard and Reserve and the way they are dispersed in our communities is an opportunity for neighbors and extended family members to get a sense for the kinds of sacrifices that are being made.

I think that these families many times approach their challenges with tremendous courage and grace. And the people around them may not see the kinds of pressures under which they are functioning.

One of the things that we are talking about a lot is community capacity building and finding ways to, since these families live away from military installations in so many cases, to build awareness within their community, to build coalitions of those who can provide support, and I think, as those efforts continue, that—you know, and it might be in the form of faith-based kinds of organizations, schools banding together, I think it is an opportunity for the community to learn the kinds of sacrifices that those families make.

Mrs. DAVIS. Anybody else?

Yes, please.

Sergeant Major PRESTON. Yes, ma'am. And I think that, you know, we have made a lot of progress at getting out to the American public. And when you look at the 2.4 million men and women serving in the services, we are less than 1 percent of the American population, so it is very, very small.

The Army National Guard and the Army Reserve, very much apart from the Army perspective, lose out in our communities every day. And, you know, when there is a natural disaster and it is, you know, those soldiers out there that are providing relief in those communities, they are the ones that really directly impact and make an impact on Americans out there in those communities, you know, during natural disasters.

But, you know, a lot of the things right now in the news have not been centered on a lot of what is going on now in the military. As operations begin to slow down and, you know, a lot of the bad news kind of stories now no longer meet the headlines, then, you know, it is not in the limelight, I think, for a lot of the American public.

And I think that is why a lot of the military families feel that—you know, 94 percent of them feel that they just—you know, they are not connected out there with what the American public feels and sacrifices that they make every day.

Sergeant Major KENT. Ma'am, Sergeant Major Preston touched on it, but I think the media has a lot to do with it. The negativity, you know, that they portray of the media, you know, sometimes, when—you know, when the military is doing a lot of positive things—I mean, you know, you ask the average military person, they are proud to serve, and they would do anything for this Nation, but you don't usually hear the positive things. You always hear the negative things from the media.

Mr. MYERS. One other thing that we are doing in Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD), we have what we call an interstate compact that deals with 10 issues, like children go to different state schools. Every school teaches them different. So under this

interstate compact, we have the states sign up for it, and they go out and let the schools know how to deal with military children.

Payday lending was in force in that. Right now, we have 25 states that have signed up for that, and we have got the biggest one, in fact, the great state of California, it passed the assembly in two committees, Education and Judiciary, and we are hopefully in the future it will pass. So that is getting the word out to the community.

Mrs. DAVIS. Thank you. I will move on to the other members. And perhaps at some point later on we can come back to some other thoughts that you have.

Mr. Wilson.

Mr. WILSON. Thank you very much.

And, Mr. Myers, in my opening statement, I indicated my interest in promoting effective and efficient coordination of different programs. I would like to know how you feel the programs are working together.

And then, I agree with Sergeant Major Kent, that a lot of the good news just doesn't get out, the Yellow Ribbon program. Could you sort of review other programs? And what is being done? I know, as a military family ourselves, I am so impressed by what is being done. But just generally state for all of us what the programs are and as to their effectiveness.

Mr. MYERS. We have a number of programs. And we are working well with the Services to meet their needs.

Recently, we had a conference where we brought in Guard and Reserves just to find out how the programs were working and what they need, especially on the Guard and Reserve, because they are displaced from the community.

So we have programs just like a family support assistance team that goes out there before deployments. We will send military family life consultants, financial advisers to augment them for pre-deployment, post-deployment, leaving and so forth. They are displaced.

We have worked with the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) to give free membership when they deploy to not only them but their family members. We have about 19,000 signed up for free membership in the Y, 29,000 family members.

We also have a military family—we have a Military OneSource where we will give non-medical counseling, and we have done it for 12 sessions, and the medical community really likes it, because it is pre-screening.

A lot of the people have problems that we have trained consultants. There are PhDs trained in consulting and so forth that can talk to them. We have financial counselors and so forth. And on these military family life consultants, we have actually put them at—with the Guard and Reserves, we have put them in our Department of Defense Education Activity (DODEA) schools overseas and our schools in the states.

We have them in our family child development center just to talk to children about issues, because, you know, we are starting to see behavioral problem with all of these deployments. Plus, all the Services have programs that augment them.

The problem that we have with a lot of these programs—there are a lot of programs—is making sure people are aware of them so it is communication and then getting out this is available and so forth.

In early September, we are having a conference for 1,600 people, bringing all these people from the military together, consultants, medical, people so—just to let them know what the programs are.

But also the military services also have great programs that support our family members. And when I go overseas, the first thing a military member says to me is, how are you taking care of my family? Things are going well. If we are taking care of their family, they can focus on the mission.

Mr. WILSON. And I am really grateful to serve with Chairwoman Susan Davis. This committee works together. And we want to be a resource for each of you and what—I like your input.

I indicated from each of you as to what additional efforts can be made by way of either policy or resources. What can we do as a Member of Congress to help you? And we can just begin right there in and on over.

Master Chief Petty Officer WEST. Yes, sir. As far as policies and resources, I would take that for the record back.

I will tell you the support that you provide on a daily basis has been phenomenal. And Mr. Myers down here in the center, the support he provides for us is, as well, incredible.

The five things I see for these programs to make it out—and we have kind of talked around it even from the first questions—is leadership, education, communication, execution, and then taking that feedback and making those programs work for us.

I think there is things that we can do as far as the education piece to those families that, as in my opening statement, that we could do a lot better. And that is what we are working. But as far as everything that is in place, I would have to take that back over—all to take a look at it, sir.

[The information referred to can be found in the Appendix beginning on page 145.]

Sergeant Major PRESTON. Sir, one of the things I talked about in my opening statement was—was access to medical care. And as I travel, you know, probably the biggest concerns I get from family members is, you know, we have great health care programs that are out there, but it is sometimes the lag of getting into those health care and getting accessibility to it.

One of the things that was mentioned in one of the opening statements, too, was health care out there, particularly counseling for children. You start looking now at, with the pace and tempo, what are we providing for children out there in the schools?

And one of the things that we are looking at doing now upcoming is, with the Chief of Staff of the Army, a comprehensive fitness program to really get in and look at the five domains of fitness.

And it is more than just physical fitness, but it is mental, it is spiritual, it is family, you know, to go in there and start to build resiliency, you know, among our soldiers and their families to better posture them for, you know, the current pace and tempo of operations that we are offering—

Mr. MYERS. I believe one of the issues we have to work on—for a lot of these programs, in the past, we have been dealing depending on the supplemental funds. So we have to start—and we are starting—to move them into the baseline.

When we went to the White House, Mrs. Obama and Dr. Biden had a bunch of focus groups just talking issues. And what she said, she wants these family support programs engrained in our government so, long after their administration has gone, these programs are continued.

When I talk to the families—their one fear is, if the war winds down and so forth, these programs are going to stop. And I think that would be a great disservice to all of our people.

Colonel LYMAN. I would speak specifically to the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program, which really is less than a year old in its push nationwide. Of course, it has roots that go further back in Minnesota.

But that program, I think, the message that we would say is, is to continue to support that, give it time to develop and grow. It has been funded at the headquarters level in the baseline budget for 2010. Excuse me, in—yes, for 2010. And we are looking to extend that in the out-years.

And so that would be—that would be my recommendation. Thank you.

Sergeant Major KENT. Sir, as we travel around speaking with numerous family members, thousands of family members, the big issue is medical care. We have a shortage of doctors right now, so it might take a family member weeks to get in just for a minor thing.

So the issue is medical care, shortage of it, but quality is there, but it is a shortage of the doctors.

Chief Master Sergeant ROY. Congressman, thank you for the question.

Along with Mr. Myers, I would like to add a comment on special needs. I opened it up in my statement and mentioned that. And it is something that we have been working.

We realize that our program, we need to continue to work on that. I mentioned a companion program along with that. And we have added that to there, along with, as Mr. Myers said, the supplemental piece, we are trying to add that into our baseline, so that would be one thing.

The other thing would be military education programs, as I mentioned before. And I listed somewhat of a litany of things that could be addressed by this committee here.

Also, the Guard and Reserve for childcare for Guard and Reserve. We are teaming with the Guard and Reserve, and what we are trying to do is make sure that their families, their children are taken care of, as well. And that is an area that we could continue to use your help on, too.

Mrs. DAVIS. Thank you.

Mr. WILSON. Thank you.

Mrs. DAVIS. Thank you, Mr. Wilson.

Mr. Loeb sack.

Mr. LOEBSACK. Thank you, Madam Chair.

I think everyone knows that the family support programs are absolutely critical to our military families. And I want to thank all of you for your service and for your efforts, but especially I am concerned about those in the Guard and Reserve who do not have the built-in community support of an active-duty base.

It is for this reason that I do strongly believe that the Yellow Ribbon program must be as effective as possible. And, Colonel Lyman, I want to thank you for your testimony. I will have some questions here in a second for you.

I have recently heard concerns raised in Iowa, where I am from, that the Yellow Ribbon program, while it is well intentioned, has some critical flaws. And I understand that it is, you know, a fairly young program, although, of course, the enduring family program preceded it.

But it has some critical flaws in its implementation that has undermined its effective support for National Guard families. And I have got four things that I have heard so far; then I will have a few questions.

One, the program does not feel personal. It can be alienating to families due to overuse of PowerPoint presentations—I know that probably that elicits a smile from all of us, right—rather than group discussions or active engagement of participants.

Second, that meetings are often referred to as drill-back and are held in Guard facilities on drill weekends, which has led to decreased family participation due largely to the misperception that they are only for servicemembers.

Third, that whereas the enduring family program, which preceded the Yellow Ribbon program in Iowa, included the Veterans Affairs (VA) at meetings in order to provide servicemembers and their families with one-on-one counseling and assistance on filling out paperwork. The current meetings do not involve the VA, even though we have a VA hospital in Iowa City, leaving some concern that families are not aware of what benefits are available to them.

And, fourth, that the post-deployment meetings are not required to be held over a certain period of time, which has led to the meetings sometimes being scheduled very close together, despite the fact that oftentimes the stress of a post-deployment period does not kick in for several weeks or months after a servicemember returns home.

So, Colonel Lyman, I am very interested in working with you to make sure that the Yellow Ribbon program works for our Guard families. And specifically, I hope you can address the concerns I have just raised, as well as the following, and I will list these four, and then you can respond now or in writing, if you would like, as well.

How is it assured that meetings are family-friendly and help in an atmosphere where families feel comfortable discussing the challenges they are facing? How is information about the meetings disseminated to the families and participation encouraged? How is feedback gathered from the families? That is very important feedback. And how were existing family support programs and their best practices integrated into the Yellow Ribbon program, if at all?

Colonel Lyman. And thanks for listening to my lengthy statement, as well.

Colonel LYMAN. Of course. Let me preface what I have to say by saying that, in my current role as the assistant director of individual and family support policy, I don't sit in the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program office.

However, I am quite acquainted with it and I would like to, in fact, give them the opportunity to respond in greater length to some of the things you are saying.

However, I can address my perception, which would be that, as far as being family-friendly, there have been some advances even recently in cooperation with military family and community policy. They have provided and funded kits that provide materials to help care for and entertain and make family-friendly these events.

They are providing these to each of the joint force headquarters in the National Guard, that includes movie in a box and other kinds of resources that children would find entertaining so that they are not sitting there saying, you know, "What am I supposed to do as a child?" And to try and involve them in the events.

I attended down in Norfolk a pre-deployment fair put on by the Marine Corps, and there were other Services involved, also. Many, many family members were present. It was held in a very nice facility that was far from any base.

And I know that at the local execution level, sometimes these may be placed at armories or head bases—there is also, however, the recommendation that they be held in a location where the family can feel relaxed and get the message that they are important to the military and that we want them to participate and feel welcomed.

The feedback from family members, the Centers of Excellence for Yellow Ribbon Reintegration receives, in addition to reports of how many attended these events, they receive feedback reports. They become the clearinghouse for discussing best practices, pushing those ideas out so they will become part of other states' efforts.

The advisory group that is working above the Yellow Ribbon program has just been established, will be staffed by three-star-level individuals to also provide some guidance and direction to the program.

I know that the events that I have heard about and the one that I attended, we did fill out a very detailed feedback form and I have provided that to them with some very constructive feedback, because I was out speaking to some of the different persons, families who were in attendance.

So I know that at a local level, there is that effort to assess the event, to make sure that they are continually improving it. I am sorry to hear that there have been some negative experiences. That is something that I think could be very detrimental to the program.

And we have got to make sure that across the board we have a high level of excellence and the people feel like, "This is something I want to come back to," because we provide these at 30, 60, 90 days. We want them to come back when it is offered again so they can receive information about programs that would fit for their level of recovery and development following their deployment.

Mr. LOEBSACK. Thank you.

Mrs. DAVIS. Thank you.

Mr. LOEBSACK. And maybe there are just some growing pains in the program, too, to be quite honest.

Colonel LYMAN. Of course.

Mr. LOEBSACK. But I thank you very much. And any others want to respond in writing to my questions, I would be happy to take that, as well.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

Mrs. DAVIS. Thank you.

Mr. Kline—I am going to go on to Mr. Kline, but perhaps will pick up on that in a little while.

Mr. KLINE. Thank you, Madam Chair.

I am going to pick up on that for just a minute, because the gentleman from Iowa has described a situation which is the opposite, the antithesis of what was thought of when the Yellow Ribbon program was put into effect nationwide.

And it is true that, to a large extent, some of the Yellow Ribbon programs in the legislation now came from Minnesota's Beyond the Yellow Ribbon program. And I will tell you that the program now in Minnesota looks nothing like what was just described.

The VA is always involved. We have a very large VA hospital there. They are there in strength, the veterans service organizations (VSO) there, the Lutheran Social Service, and many others are there. I have attended some of these events, and there are wives and husbands and mothers and fathers in attendance. They are not held in armories in Minnesota. They are held in very, very nice facilities.

There are things in the program such as marriage retreats at one of the finest hotels in the Twin Cities that is nothing like an armory. The program, if it is working as the gentleman described, we ought to throw it out today, but I can just say without getting into a state-versus-state thing that the potential is there and the example is there for it to work and do what it is supposed to do.

And the running the programs together in terms of time is exactly contrary to what I believe the law says and certainly the intention was, is you would come back at a 30-day period, a 60-day period, and a 90-day period, so that leadership can, in fact, assess the progress or perhaps lack of progress that might be being made in reintegrating.

So that is a terrifying story, and I would love to talk to you about that later.

A couple other really quick things. The chair mentioned the 94 percent number. We were talking about families who perceive that their sacrifice isn't perceived. And I am almost surprised, Madam Chair, that it is not 100 percent, because, in one sense, that is kind of the human condition. Until you have walked a mile in my shoes, you can't really appreciate the pain that I am suffering.

And it is absolutely true that military families arguably anytime have got some stresses because they are being moved. They are having to pack the kids up, move them out of school, even without the stress of deployment.

So it is not at all surprising to me that military families feel like their sacrifices aren't appreciated. And I certainly that while we have been doing everything we can to ease their sacrifice, but I don't know that we could ever make public awareness to the point

where they—where people—families would believe that everybody understands that they are suffering.

And then—and finally—or not finally—I still have time, so it is not finally. A number of you have mentioned—and, Sergeant Major Kent, you really hit on it, that there were concerns about medical support. And I think when you were talking about lack of doctors, you were talking about when the family goes to the naval hospital or perhaps the Army hospital—there aren't doctors there.

And we need to be alert to that. This subcommittee has got a lot of concern about that. And we should be paying close attention as we have looked at all sorts of arrangements to make sure that there are, in fact, enough doctors.

But a couple of you mentioned TRICARE. My family used TRICARE and Champs or whatever. I forgot whatever preceded that.

Mrs. DAVIS. CHAMPUS.

Mr. KLINE. Yes, CHAMPUS, I knew it was something like that. And we didn't like it, frankly. It is what we had, didn't—seemed like it didn't pay enough. We found too many doctors that wouldn't accept it.

And so I hope you will continue to tell us about those problems. If we have communities where you cannot find a doctor who takes TRICARE, that is unacceptable, and we need to work that.

And then, finally, because the light is turning yellow, we now have a lot of programs. Mr. Myers, you listed a bunch. We have some read-ahead material here. There are just all sorts of family advocacy programs.

And one of the things I think you said, Master Chief, is that, gosh, we need to get the word out to them. And I am struck that we have had this Military OneSource operation, which is there all the time, 24/7, literally where people can call in and ask questions about everything, what services are available, where the nearest babysitter is, practically. I think it is a fantastic resource.

And I hope that we are exercising that. And if it is not working and if it can't address those concerns about, well, what is available to me, we need to fix that.

My perception is—I have visited a OneSource center. I have talked to the people who provide that service. My son and his—he is in the active in the Army now, and his family is very much aware of that. We need to make sure that people know how to use it and make sure it is doing what it is supposed to do.

I see my—I have exceeded my time, and so I yield back.

Mrs. DAVIS. Thank you, Mr. Kline.

Mr. KLINE. Thank you.

Mrs. DAVIS. Dr. Fleming.

Dr. FLEMING. Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.

I have heard a couple of comments. And, of course, Mr. Kline just mentioned the fact that adequate access to health care is a problem. My background, I was a physician in the Navy back in the 1970's. And we were really well-staffed, and getting CHAMPUS in those days was not that difficult.

Being a practicing physician, though, in recent years, we found that the reimbursement was horrible for TRICARE. And you often didn't get it at all. It actually began to cost—we had calculated it

cost more money to file for the money than it did to actually receive the money.

So it became—I think the comment was charity care or something like that. That is literally the way it was our experience.

Now, I know there have been some changes in that, one being that there is electronic filing of claims now that we didn't have. So I am sure that is helpful.

But in visiting around the—my district, I am still running into issues with that, not just with CHAMPUS, but also on base care. I visited Fort Polk recently, and a young lady I visited with was 14 weeks pregnant and still could not get an obstetrical appointment. That is atrocious.

Now, in that specific case, all the doctors are deployed. But there are plenty of—I shouldn't say there are plenty of obstetrical physician in the area, but there are enough that she shouldn't have to wait to 14 weeks.

Yet I am shown surveys that the satisfaction rates among members who are receiving CHAMPUS care are very high. So I am really perplexed by what I saw on the other side of the fence, what I am getting as feedback, but then the reports that I am getting.

So I would really open this up. Perhaps, Sergeant Major Preston, you might—since you kind of led with that—you might want to start by commenting on that.

Sergeant Major PRESTON. Yes, sir.

Sir, you are exactly right. And, you know, the challenge you have got is your Army's health care professionals, they belong to units and organizations. And when that unit or organization deploys, of course, they take their health care professionals with them.

What we are supposed to do is be able to continue providing health care to the families that are left behind, you know, through the TRICARE system by pushing, you know, our families off the installation to those surrounding communities.

And, you know, from Louisiana, you know Fort Polk. There is not a lot of infrastructure there around Fort Polk to really provide immediate care. And I am surprised that it was—it has taken that long for a young lady down there to get that care in that length of time. So that is the challenge that we have been dealing with.

And, of course, when you look at the number of health care providers out in the civilian community that take TRICARE, many of them were left with a bad taste in their mouth from dealing with TRICARE before, because of the length of time it took to get reimbursement.

You know, I myself have dealt with a lot of cases overseas, particularly in Germany, where, you know, we have pushed family members out on the Germany economy to receive health care. And, of course, now you are dealing with, you know, health care providers in another country trying to get reimbursement. And thatacerbates the length of time to get the payment in.

I have sat down with the TRICARE management team, and they have laid out what they have done now to restructure and streamline that process to improve their system. So from where it was to where it is today, I would tell you it has come a long way and it has improved, but, you know, we have still got a ways to go. And there are some gaps in seams out there that need to be corrected.

Dr. FLEMING. Yes. Before I go to other panel members, let me insert that, really, CHAMPUS got the reputation—or TRICARE got the reputation that, of course, private insurance was the best, Medicare second best, Medicaid third, and, of course, TRICARE was the least desirable form of reimbursement.

And oftentimes—and maybe it is the cynicism that we physicians sometimes have about that—it seems to work in favor of the payer for things to be inefficient. And that is one of my worries about—slightly changing the subject for a moment—about a government-run health care system, is we may see the same sort of things, again, longer waiting lines, rationing, and so forth.

So it really comes down to how quickly—how timely payment is made and how adequate. There are plenty of doctors in this country who—and I am sure there are many more doctors, like myself, who for years saw patients knowing we weren't getting paid adequately, but that was an acceptable thing for me.

But there comes a point when you just can't afford it any longer. And so adequate payment, timely payment is key for access of care.

Sergeant Major PRESTON. And if I could add one thing—and, you know, Fort Polk is one of those communities that is somewhat isolated. And when I travel—last week, I was in Alaska and, you know, very isolated communities up there. And that also acerbates the challenge.

And, you know, health care—there is a shortage of health care professionals, you know, in our country right now. And that hurts us not only from a recruiting perspective and filling our ranks, but also what is available outside of military bases.

Mrs. DAVIS. Thank you, Dr. Fleming.

Ms. Shea-Porter.

Ms. SHEA-PORTER. Thank you.

I, too, have some questions about, when there are so many committees and so much organization devoted toward helping medical and families who either have medical needs or long deployments, how are they missing the message?

And so I also agree with my colleague when he talks about Military OneSource, et cetera, et cetera. And I look at your framework and I look at all your efforts, and yet when I go and I talk to the families and I say, "Do you know there's such-and-such?" And they say, "No, they don't."

So somehow or another, we are still missing the mark. And so I sat and thought, and I said, "Well, what would I do if I wanted to get the message out in a military community?" I would put the phone numbers on a grocery bag. I would ask all the grocers in the community to put the phone number on the grocery bag, because that is where people go.

I would put the number in a doctor's office. I would put the number by a pharmacy. I would put the number wherever anybody is forced to stand in line. That is where I would put the numbers, because for all the money that we are spending and for all the good effort, somehow or another, they don't know.

And I have been on ships and I have asked them, and they tell me they don't know. And I have been abroad. They don't know. And I have been on local bases, and they don't know. So something

is missing. And I just would put that out there that I know it must be very frustrating to you, also, that you have these services.

Now, sometimes they do know, and then they tell me that they can't have access because it is actually not available, that you simply don't have the personnel to provide. And I have heard the stories about TRICARE. In my own family, we have experienced that with a cousin of mine.

I would also like to address one other thing. I was a military spouse. And my husband was born and brought up—born on a military base. And I would say there is a different mood now.

I would say that the families are under a great deal of stress and that they have shifted in the sense that we always felt that people knew. Sure, they didn't know exactly how hard some things could be, but they kind of knew. And now, even though families know that we love them and that we honor them, they still feel more than ever before that we don't really know what is happening to them.

And I would attribute that to several factors. And one, I would say, is that constant deployment is taking its toll, that families don't have a chance to rebuild. And I am very concerned about that. Those prolonged deployments, and the kids being spread out around the country, versus being on a military base and all of them in the same school. That is contributing.

I heard a horrific story about a woman who had an asthma attack. Her husband is deployed. She had an asthma attack, and her little seven-year-old packed the bag and the little kid and went next door. This is isolation, and this is really something that we have got to address.

The other part I am concerned about is what is happening to the children whose families have experienced injury. They have to move, and they have to go to a community, say, if they come to Walter Reed or they go to some other place. What is happening to those kids?

And so that is what I really want to ask each one of you in particular. What is happening to the children once we have a wounded warrior and we have gotten past the first phase? What is the child's life like? What are we doing? Are we leaving those kids unattended inadvertently by not making sure they have constant, constant support and that they are surrounded by people who understand their story?

And, also, I would like you to please address dual deployments, because I think that that—it is terrible to have one parent out of the house when you are three years old. It is completely devastating to have both and not to know—and for them to keep being deployed.

So, Sergeant Major Kent, I would just start with you—

Sergeant Major KENT. Yes, ma'am.

Ms. SHEA-PORTER [continuing]. If you would be willing to answer. And I would like to hear your perspective and what you can do or what you believe can be done with the dual deployments, the long deployments, and the children of wounded warriors.

Sergeant Major KENT. Thank you very much, ma'am.

First of all, I would start off with the wounded warriors. About two years ago, we stood up a unit called the Wounded Warrior

Regiment. It is commanded by a colonel, and they have a sergeant major. And we have a unit on the West Coast, and we have a unit on the East Coast.

And they have a 24-hour call center. And even if a wounded warrior exits the Marine Corps, they still make contact with them and their families. And this is a 24-hour call center.

So we ensure that we lose nobody in the system. And we are confident, you know, that it is working, because we sent out teams, and they have town hall meetings, and they talk to families constantly, and we are confident that it is working because the chain of command is set up like any other unit, and they keep tabs on these wounded warriors 24 hours a day.

And that call center is set up. And, you know, and I welcome you, ma'am, you know, to go down to Quantico, Virginia. The headquarters is there. And they can give you a thorough brief on, you know, exactly what they do there.

Dual deployments for our warriors, we try not to do that, based on leadership. Now, sometimes, if they are in a critical job, it is a possibility that, you know, both of them may have to go. But leadership is very conscious and not to deploy two people at the same time, especially if they have small children. And we are confident, you know, that the leadership is actually looking at that.

But sometimes, if they are in a critical job, you know, I am not going to sit here and just tell you anything. If they are in a critical job, they may have to go forward, both of them.

Ms. SHEA-PORTER. Do they have an appeal process? Is there somebody they can go to if—and ask for it to be reviewed if both are being deployed?

Sergeant Major KENT. Yes, ma'am. We have a chain of command all the way up. And I will be quite honest with you. The commandant and I, we get e-mails from Privates First Class (PFCs). So, you know, the Marines are not shy about bringing up issues.

Ms. SHEA-PORTER. Thank you.

Mrs. DAVIS. Thank you.

Dr. Snyder.

Dr. SNYDER. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Mr. Myers, you made the comment about special needs kids and autism and made the legitimate point that there are more special needs kids than just autistic kids. And I agree with that.

I think, as you know, one of the problems our parents of autistic kids have is that autism gets caught up in this whole issue of mental health parity, which is autism doesn't get treated as a physical illness. It gets treated as something that a lot of insurance hasn't covered through the years and in a way that I think is unfair.

And so that has created some gaps in coverage. I think that is where some of the interest has come from. And then, as you know, some of the therapies for autism are quite comprehensive and people-power-intensive and puts them in a special category, too.

But I share your need about special-needs kids. I think you and I have talked before about the fact that my own view is that base commanders ought to about once a quarter or so hold a town meeting for special-needs parents and families, because my experience is that parents for a variety of reasons, the transit in and out of military bases, transit in and out of the military, but also because

of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and privacy concerns, that there may be, you know, ten families on a base with kids with severe asthma, but they won't know each other, because the caretakers can't tell the other folks that they have there.

This happened to me with a group of autistic kids. And I think—and I did talk about this before—where I asked the Air Force base to invite parents of autistic kids where I can meet with them.

And, of course, if they didn't want to meet me, they didn't have to. But we talked for, I don't know, 15, 20, 30 minutes before I realized that they had never met each other. They didn't learn a damn thing from me, but they learned a lot from each other about what services were available.

And, I mean, it was just like a tremendous weight off them that they actually could talk to parents. Well, I think that would be the goal. I think that is what probably what would be accomplished with some kind of an ongoing, regular set, everybody in the military at any base have—with their families—have some kind of a town hall meeting for parents of special-needs kids.

And then, after the meeting, there could be the table for, you know, different kids have different needs, but that could be helpful, because it really is a challenge for our military. It is a big determinant of where people in the military want to go to be stationed is, what is there for my family? And I think it helps to have a supportive system.

I wanted to ask one parochial question, if I might have you all help me. And it is about public school buildings. We have a situation at the Little Rock Air Force Base where a school building on base, owned and operated by the—I mean, operated by the local school district, who has the responsibility for replacing it, that everybody agrees is inadequate. And it has been an issue sitting out there for some time.

The base commanders have been very aggressive—appropriately so—about making the case to the local school district that the building should be replaced. And the most recent disappointment is—and it was one of the reasons I voted for the stimulus bill, because there were dollars there to go for school districts around the country to help build school buildings. They are not going to use any of the federal stimulus dollars for this school building on this federal facility.

And so my question is—and maybe this is not an issue that you all deal with—do we have other issues with public schools on military bases? Are they maintained well? Are they treated appropriately by the local school districts? Is that something any of you have looked at?

Or, Mr. Myers, I will direct it to you.

Mr. MYERS. I am not familiar off the top of my head about public schools on bases. You know, we have Domestic Dependent Elementary and Secondary School (DDESS) schools on some of our bases and DODEA schools overseas. But I would be more than happy to look into that.

Dr. SNYDER. If you wouldn't mind doing that. I mean, I feel for the school district, because the school district, like most of them, they do not have an overabundance of money. On the other hand,

I think—the point you all are making today is we have a special responsibility to our military families.

And I talked to one parent who said it is a real downer when you are overseas to get an e-mail from your kid that the roof leaked again—literally leaked again—and hit his desk this time and ruined his papers and things.

But, Colonel Lyman, do you have any comment?

Colonel LYMAN. Well, I was just going to say, there is a working group that is between DOD and Department of Education that deals with a host of education issues having to do with that special population, and particularly with those communities that immediately surround military installations.

And I represent the Reserve Component on that committee. And this is something I could certainly bring to their attention.

Dr. SNYDER. Yes, well, and maybe it is an isolated situation. The very supportive community—and it is a district that doesn't have an abundance of money. On the other hand, it is a, I think, a priority.

The base is willing to donate land outside the perimeter that is federal land for the facility. That deals with some security issues, but also that is a big chunk of construction, if you have the land available. And it would be a great site.

My time is up. Thank you.

Mrs. DAVIS. Thank you.

Mr. Jones.

Mr. JONES. Madam Chairman, thank you.

And I want to thank those of you in the—at the panel for your service to our Nation. And I want to piggyback on Mrs. Shea-Porter.

I have told this story many times, and I have got a reason to tell it again, to get to the point of what I want to ask you. Back in 2007, I was invited to national reading day to be at Camp Lejeune, Johnson Elementary School. And as I finished reading Dr. Seuss to the children, there were 15 kids in the library, 6 years of age, 5 and 6.

And the questions were, as a child would ask, “Do you have a dog?” “Have you seen the President?” Those kind of questions. Now, the last child—this is a point I want to get to—the last child—and I made the announcement, “This will be the last question. I have to leave.” The librarian was standing there, and my staff, a retired Marine, Jason Larry.

And the little boy looked up at me and he said, “My daddy's not dead yet.” “My daddy's not dead yet.” I was so shocked that it had to be at least 40 seconds—I couldn't respond. I came out with a response of, “Well, God loves our moms and our dads.”

And the reason I mentioned that, because I believe it was Sergeant Preston, in your comments—I was late getting here—or maybe your answer to a question. With knowing the shortage of psychiatrists, psychologist and medical doctors in the military—and another point I want to make before I ask the question.

I won't call the name of the Marine, but I was there for the sermon. He had given a guide dog to a Marine who was badly burned, badly burned. And thinking about the young man that said this about his father, and thinking about this corporal who was receiv-

ing the guide dog, and knowing how badly he was burned, are we able to really help those children who, at five, six, seven, eight, think about their daddy not coming back or mom not coming back, or one coming back who is paralyzed, or one coming back whose face will not look normal again?

Do you really feel that, in this shortage of medical professionals, that we are doing—I know we are doing the best we can do, but can more be done for those children? This preys on my heart for a long time, that these young children that would grow up with that different look out of the face of a father or mother or maybe their daddy didn't come back.

Do you feel that—under the circumstances, I am sure you do, that we are doing the best we can—but can more be done? I will go to you, Sergeant Kent, because I think you meant—I think you meant—Preston, excuse me. I think you mentioned counseling for children in a general statement.

Sergeant Major PRESTON. And, sir, I will tell you that, you know, across the board, I mean, for all of us, we are working right now focusing on getting those counselors and those services into all of our schools.

And one of the things that, you know, General Casey said last week as we were working through the details of this rollout of a comprehensive soldier fitness program, I mean, when you look at the five domains of fitness, one of those is families. It is building resilient families out there that are able to cope with the stresses of life right now that we have put on them.

So one of those is being able to get those services out there into all of our schools and to be able to take care of the children, as they are growing up in all different ages.

And we have done some of that right now with the child development new centers that are out there. And, of course, the next step now is a lot of our schools which are tied to public school districts.

And there are a lot of best practices out there that are going on. We have got, you know, now family liaisons in a lot of the schools out there that have large military populations.

You know, one of the things that I am very proud of, for the city of El Paso, you know, what they did was they have hired family spouses to work as family liaisons in the schools, where they have large densities of military children to help the children and the families integrate into the school district, but then also that they are there all the time with the children, so those that do need counseling and do need help, you know, we are able to get more of those services focused on the individuals.

Mr. JONES. Does anybody else have a comment?

Yes, sir.

Mr. MYERS. A couple things. One of the problems that we have is, as we talk about mental health care and its access to health care, we had a Senate committee where we had spouses talk and they rated health care excellent, but access poor.

And what we have found out, families with children, a lot of TRICARE providers will—a lot of health professionals will not accept TRICARE. So constantly we hear at Fort Campbell, these families have to travel to Nashville, an hour-and-a-half, to get the care and back.

So what we are doing is Secretary Thomas, he is actually going to go to Fort Drum and Fort Campbell with the TRICARE people, the health care people, just to find out if we can break it loose.

Now, dealing with children, we have a great relationship with "Sesame Street." They did a national TV—the first one was dealing with the deployments. The second one that they came out recently was when Dad or Mom comes home differently. And these are family members who participate, losing arms and so forth.

The next one they are going to do is loss of a loved one. So this helps the children. Plus, we have these family life consultants and our child development centers at the base just to talk to children.

But our children, they have it rough. There are military members that will not put their uniform on at home. They leave it at work, because the kids, they see that, they think Dad or Mom is going to be deployed.

Secretary Snyder—I mean, Dr. Snyder, when he said when he leaves for Washington, puts his tie on, the kids know you are leaving. So it is a big impact.

Colonel LYMAN. May I?

Mrs. DAVIS. Yes.

Colonel LYMAN. One program that has been mentioned—and I just wanted to emphasize it here is Military OneSource. That is a program—I had a good friend whose son died in a tragic car accident, 17-year-old. He was just being eaten alive with his grief, suggested he call Military OneSource.

He called them. Every time I am with him and he runs into somebody, he says, "This guy turned me on to OneSource. I got counseling that really changed my situation." And I think that is an opportunity that is available to every family nationwide, because there are contracts with therapists in communities.

And at one time, the session limit was six sessions per issue. That has now increased to 12 sessions per issue. That is a marvelous resource for anyone to make that call, get a referral to a therapist within easy distance of their home. I believe in most cases they would be able to do that and get that help.

Mr. JONES. Thank you, Madam Chairman.

Mrs. DAVIS. Thank you. If I could just follow up with that, are you all able to do public service announcements, getting that message out with the number? Is that something that all the major broadcasters, as well as cable, have accepted? And is there something that we can do to facilitate that?

Mr. MYERS. That information is getting out on all the bases. We are doing TV announcements for overseas, base newspapers, and so forth, and the word is getting out, because I think this year the calls to Military OneSource have probably increased 40 percent.

So families know about it. They are calling and so forth. But you still find these little pockets where they don't know.

So as I told you, Secretary Thomas is going out just to get the feedback, to pass the word, get the information out and so forth. And National Military Family Association (NMFA), they really help us getting the word out. So I think the word is getting out now.

Mrs. DAVIS. If I could follow up on the issue of children, because I think that people think about the impact of deployments on children ages 6 to 12. And I think, Mr. Myers, you were at the Baby

Caucus meeting when they talked about the impact zero to five, the Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC) found that children between those ages were highly impacted.

And could you comment on that? And what do you think should be done? Are there additional studies we should be doing? Services—clearly we know there could be and should be and we would like to see more mental health workers that are able to relate to families with children at this age. But short of that, what else should we be doing to understand this better and the impact that that could have on the future productivity and the future life of that child?

Mr. MYERS. Well, the Baby Caucus, I mean, that was really great. We had a number of congressmen, people there, and so forth, and they had professionals. They had Dr. Luster, who did a project focus study that is going to be coming out later this month. They had the wife of the The Adjutant General (TAG) from North Carolina, and they had a military spouse. Her husband was in the Guard. She was a few months pregnant. He deployed. He came back when the baby was six months old.

But she tells the story, when he was gone, he would call. She would put the phone to the womb so he would talk to the baby, would put a picture of him in front of that baby. The only thing that disappointed her, when the husband came home, the baby bonded with her, and here she has been talking to the baby, the first word out of the baby's mouth was "Dada."

So the father really liked it. And they gave us—they showed us some films of just dealing with babies. They had a parent dealing with a baby, interacting. The baby would point. The mother would look and so forth.

Then they had the mother come back and sit in front of the baby. The baby did the same thing. The mother just looked at the baby, never moved. The baby pointed, nothing. All of a sudden, the baby starts hitting, screaming and crying.

So it is getting the word that connection at that young age is so, so important. And you get—especially the Marines. You get these young Marines. They haven't really even bonded maybe with their wife. They have young children. The bond with that child, so I think it is a great first meeting.

I think they are going to do studies. And the more we get involved with that, I mean, that is a major impact, zero to three, because that is when they can develop developmental problems and so forth. But we really appreciate it. I know you are a part of that caucus.

Mrs. DAVIS. Yes, thank you.

I want to just turn to another area which I have to do, I think, with just the changing environments that we all live in and the difference of so many women working and, in some cases, working at lower pay, perhaps, than their counterparts and, as military spouses often find themselves, quite mobile and unable to really establish themselves in areas. In the Air Force, about 50 percent of the women are working outside the home.

Are we adjusting? Are we finding ways of really responding to that situation? Because, you know, it is not the traditional family unit in some ways that, you know, the military has grown up with,

where we relied on moms at home to be able to do many things and be there with families, where, in fact, they have to work today. And it is quite different.

How are you responding to that? What has changed? And how are you evaluating any of the programs that are out there that have to deal with the dual working families in the services, as well as not necessarily both of them in the service?

Mr. MYERS. Well, especially for military families that both work and our child development centers, people have to work longer. We have family daycare to put them in there. We have care 24 hours a day to take care of the children. But, remember, when someone deploys, mom or dad is home taking them to soccer, so forth and so on.

Thanks to Congress, we have started these career advancement accounts where military spouses can come in and sign online to take college courses, get licensed for various things. You know, military spouses leave, you could be a schoolteacher in one state. You have to get a license in another state.

So we have these accounts. And it is up to \$6,000 where you can apply to get your license renewed, take college courses, get licenses, and so forth. And the majority—we have 34,000 spouses signed up since March for this program. And most of them are taking courses to go into the health care area.

But the bases themselves, the squadron has things to support the spouse. But this is different. You know, when I was in the service, one spouse stayed home. So it is really—there is a lot of pressure on the family. And a lot of families also depend on their mother and father, grandmother and grandfather and so forth. The services also have programs to address that.

Mrs. DAVIS. Thank you. Certainly an area that we need to work much harder on.

We have a vote, and—six, six votes actually, so it is going to be some time.

Mr. Wilson, do you want to follow up quickly with a question? And if we can get to Ms. Shea-Porter, then maybe we will close it out, since it is going to be an hour, and we will have some questions for the record.

Mr. WILSON. Thank you, Madam Chairwoman. Instead of a question, I just want to thank you.

We have a circumstance, as Chairwoman Davis has identified, and that is that we have a higher percentage of married military personnel today than ever before. But I also see this as great opportunities for military families.

To me, I know what it has meant for myself, for my four sons, for their families. It is very uplifting, their military service. It has created opportunities beyond imagination.

The travel, when I visit with young people from my home state, whether it be in Guam or South Korea or Iraq, Afghanistan, Kuwait, you name it, it is just so uplifting to see the opportunities for young people.

And so as we are—as giving young people and military the opportunity to protect our country, you are also working with their families. And I just—I want to thank you, as I stated earlier. However we can back you up by policy or any other way, please let us

know. But it is just wonderful to know the opportunities for a person that wants to serve in our military.

Thank you, and God bless each of you.

Mrs. DAVIS. Thanks.

Ms. Shea-Porter, a quick question?

Ms. SHEA-PORTER. Yes, I would like to thank you, also, for all that you are doing.

But, Mr. Myers, I would like to ask you in particular, do you have any idea how many dual deployed you are actually dealing with? And do you know how many children of wounded warriors we have who have had to move? Do you have any idea how many have been displaced?

Mr. MYERS. I would have to go to each of the services for that. But when I was with the Air Force, I dealt with the wounded warrior program. I can tell you, we had a military person assigned to that family to take care of that family. They had priority. They had all their childcare needs and so forth to make sure that they were accommodated.

The one thing that we had pushed—and I think it is going to come in for legislation—in many cases, the spouse leaves her employment to go there, to take care of the injured person and access a non-medical attendant. So they are losing their income there. There are non-medical—it is a non-medical attendant.

That person is out of the hospital—we should give them compensation to do that job. Taking care of children is extremely important. We had an airman that was burned over 80 percent of his body. He was down at Brooks Medical Center.

People who have burns, unfortunately, a lot of them do not survive. We found out this person all of a sudden was not doing well. His family—problem was, he was afraid his three-year-old child would view him as a monster. We got the right people to talk to the family, the child. The child saw him as his father. Today, 114 operations later, he is doing great and wants to continue to serve in the Air Force.

Ms. SHEA-PORTER. I am very happy to hear you say that. We should compensate these families—

Mr. MYERS. Correct.

Ms. SHEA-PORTER [continuing]. Because I have had a large number of them who have had to leave their homes to care for their loved ones. And I heard a particularly tragic story where this woman took care of somebody who now was paying her mortgage just out of the goodness of her heart because she was there with her son. And I don't think that was ever our intention to leave these families hanging over a financial cliff, as well as an emotional cliff.

Mr. MYERS. I agree.

Ms. SHEA-PORTER. Thank you very much.

I yield back.

Mrs. DAVIS. Thank you. And I know Ms. Shea-Porter was on the trip, and we went to Afghanistan and met with many women there. And we did hear a number of stories, because they were single parents and, in some cases, having their parents or relatives care for the children and, in some case, even having difficulty getting access to medical services for that child.

And I think we tried to deal with some of those issues. But it is certainly an important one.

Yes?

Sergeant Major PRESTON. If I could, I would like to just talk to the dual military couples, just from an Army perspective. And as I spend a lot of time out on the road and I talk to a lot of military couples, and for all of them, they—you know, when they went to an installation as a couple, they have a choice. And what I advise them is always—is to go in as a couple and talk to the commander.

And there are a lot of cases, military couples want to be deployed together, you know? You know, Tonya Gerard just left my office. You know, her husband is a soldier. You know, both of them have no children, and they want to be deployed together, so they are on the same deployment cycle, they can take leaves together, celebrate the same holidays and birthdays together. You know, for that couple, for them to be deployed together is what is best for them.

And then you have those couples out there that have young children. And, of course, what they don't want to do is be deployed at the same time. And by talking to the commander, they can get in different units and organizations that are on different deployment cycles.

But for the single parents that are out there, as well as the dual military couples, you know, they are required to have a family care plan so that, you know, they have got those plans in place to make sure that their children are taken care of in the event that they are deployed.

Ms. SHEA-PORTER. Right. So many repeated deployments, though, it is falling apart. Many of the family plans have fallen apart because it is now the third deployment. And, you know, Grandma is not as happy and as willing or unable to do that or the brother or whomever. So it is the repeated deployments, I think, that has put that extra strain on them.

Thank you.

Mrs. DAVIS. I want to thank you all for being here. I think, because of the fact that we are not going to be back here for about an hour, we are going to go ahead and conclude.

I appreciate all the programs that you have shared with us and the initiatives. I think one of the things that we are very interested in, of course, is how you evaluate them. It is not just based on the number of people that participate, but are they being institutionalized? You know, are they seen as something that is going to be there for them and for the families?

And so the extent to which you can get that kind of feedback will be very important to us. And we hope that we will have an opportunity to meet with you again, perhaps in a roundtable, to continue the opportunities to do that.

So I want to thank you again very much on behalf of the families that you care about so deeply. And I want to remind you that we are very interested in making incremental, but continuing improvement always in how we treat our families.

Mr. MYERS. Thank you for your support. We sincerely appreciate it.

Mrs. DAVIS. Thank you very much.

[Whereupon, at 2:01 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

A P P E N D I X

JULY 22, 2009

PREPARED STATEMENTS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

JULY 22, 2009

Opening Statement of Chairwoman Susan Davis
House Armed Services Subcommittee on Military Personnel
Hearing on Oversight of Family Support Programs
July 22, 2009

The hearing will come to order.

I want to welcome our witnesses. Today we will focus our attention on the multitude of family support programs within the Services and the Department of Defense. While we have focused on several of these issues in the past, this is the first subcommittee hearing in over a decade that will solely focus on family support programs that are so important and vital to our military families during these challenging times.

The burden of eight years of conflict has not only fallen on our service members. A large portion of that burden has also fallen on their families as well, and unfortunately their plight is often overshadowed. While the majority of Americans have been outstanding in their support of our men and women in uniform, sadly, the majority of military families feel that the average American does not understand the sacrifices these families are making as well.

The toll is especially significant on those most vulnerable—our military children. The number of military children who are seeking mental health care since the start of Operation Iraqi Freedom has more than doubled. And, many children are being forced to wait months to receive treatment because access to care is not sufficient.

However, mental health is just one area where there are challenges. As we have found, there are issues that affect service members going through the deployment process—pre, during, and post-deployment—and while their issues are slight different, military families face their own set of hurdles during each phase as well. It is our responsibility to ensure that we work to address these issues and support our families as we do our men and women in uniform.

I do not mean to imply that nothing has been done for families, quite the contrary. The Services and the Department have undertaken efforts to improve services and programs for military families. However, there is more than can and must be done to support all of those who defend our nation, and that includes military families.

Today we have asked the senior enlisted representatives from each of the Services to be with us, as the eyes and ears of their individual force, they know and understand what is happening on the ground level. We look forward to a candid discussion of the issues facing military families. We have also asked a representative from Reserve Affairs be here to provide the perspective of the unique challenges Reserve and Guard families face, as well as a representative from the Department who is responsible for all of these programs.

Let me introduce our witnesses:

- Mr. Art Myer, Deputy Undersecretary of Defense Military Community and Family Policy, Office of the Secretary of Defense Personnel and Readiness;
- Colonel Cory Lyman, Assistant Director Individual and Family Readiness Policy, Office of the Secretary of Defense Reserve Affairs;
- Sergeant Major Kenneth O. Preston, Sergeant Major of the Army;
- Sergeant Major Carlton W. Kent, Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps;
- Master Chief Petty Officer Rick D. West, Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy;
- And, Chief Master Sergeant James A. Roy, Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force.

Gentlemen, welcome, I would ask that you testify in the order that I just introduced you. Without objection, all written statements will be included in the record. Mr. Wilson, do you have any comments that you wish to make?

[Mr. Wilson's statement]

Thank you, Mr. Wilson. I want to remind our witnesses to please keep their opening remarks to no more than 3 minutes. My hope is that if we are able to keep the official statements to 3 minutes, it will allow us to have a more in-depth discussion on the challenges that our military families may be facing.

Without objection, I ask unanimous consent that the written testimony from the Fleet Reserve Association be included for the record.

With that, Mr. Myer, would you please proceed?

Opening Statement for Ranking Member Joe Wilson
House Armed Services Subcommittee on Military Personnel
Hearing on Family Support Programs
April 29, 2009

"Thank you, Mrs. Davis, for holding this hearing. And thank you to each member of today's panel. I am particularly pleased to see the senior enlisted personnel from the services.

"Meeting the needs of military families has never been more challenging or complex. We are a nation at war, fighting on two fronts and the strains of those wars translate directly and immediately to the families of the members of the Armed Forces. When you disrupt the military family unit by deploying a key member of that family a host of issues arise that stress all aspects of family life: economic, physical and mental health, personal finances, interpersonal relationships and many more areas.

"This subcommittee, the Department of Defense and the military services have taken any number of initiatives to address the needs of military families. During my 31 years of service with the Army Reserve and National Guard, I conducted pre-mobilization legal counseling and will preparation statewide. I appreciate what efforts have been made for military families, which I know firsthand.

"Yet, despite all that has been accomplished, there remains evidence that the family support system may not be completely effective.

"While I know that the Department of Defense and the military services are committed to assisting and supporting military families, I am not convinced that the provision of those services is fully coordinated and integrated. So I am interested in hearing from our witnesses as to how effective the coordination and integration effort is.

"I am also interested in hearing where we must provide additional effort—in the form of policy and resources—to improve what is already being done."

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STATEMENT
OF
ARTHUR J. MYERS
PRINCIPAL DIRECTOR
(MILITARY COMMUNITY AND FAMILY POLICY)
BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY PERSONNEL
OF THE
HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
ON
FAMILY SUPPORT

JULY 22, 2009

Not for Publication until Released
By Committee on Armed Services
U.S. House of Representatives

The Department of Defense has made family support a high priority in recognition of the crucial role families play in supporting Service members on the battlefield, a concept that has resounded during these times of multiple deployments. To ensure continuity in program delivery, the Department increased the FY2010 Defense-wide baseline by shifting \$234M from the Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) funding to the baseline. While this is a step in the right direction, we will need to continue to augment baseline funding with OCO in FY2010 for family support directly related to the Department's war efforts. The FY2010 Defense-wide Family Assistance budget request is \$472M to fund programs such as child care expansion, outreach to Guard and Reserve, non-medical counseling, financial education and training and access to training and certification opportunities for spouses (this amount does not include funding for DoD schools). These programs are lifelines of support for military members and their families who are stationed around the globe. The purpose of my statement today is to describe our many successes and build a record that supports authorization of funds and programs needed for family support. Our military leaders stand with me in this important endeavor to reiterate the inextricable link between investments in quality of life programs and readiness of soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines. It is clear, at a time of

increased deployment and demand on our Service members and their families, there is need for consistent, commensurate family support.

Improvements to military quality of life are framed by the past with a view toward the future. Today, the Department has a wide range of quality of life policies, services and programs to address personal and family issues. Initiatives address the nexus of work life and personal/family life; all are concerned with key organizational goals related to recruitment, retention, morale and mission readiness.

Child Care: The Department considers care for children of military members to be a key work force issue with a direct impact on the effectiveness and readiness of the force. Though the Department has a strong commitment to child care and youth programs, some components still have unmet demand for child care. Efforts are ongoing to address an estimated shortage of approximately 37,000 child care spaces needed for active duty, Guard, and Reserve families. The FY 2010 Defense-wide budget includes \$60M to expand child care in civilian communities for public-private ventures. Plans to build this capacity involve utilizing a myriad of delivery systems to include existing child care facilities, schools, recreation and after-school programs, and home-based care programs. We will aid in the recruitment of private sector licensed child care providers at

locations where child care needs are identified, such as locations from which Guard or Reserve units are being deployed. The Department will ensure the level of quality is comparable to that offered on-installation by implementing an assistance plan geared to the specific needs of the community. We will utilize existing state and local resources, supplementing when needed, to raise the quality of care.

Increased child care capacity requires a high-quality, well-trained workforce. We need to eliminate barriers to hiring practices key to expanding our partnerships with community providers of child care. The Department has exercised a robust construction program to accelerate child care capacity and increase spaces by over 15,000 on a rapid basis. The temporary program to use minor military construction authority for the construction of child development centers provided a means to increase the availability of quality, affordable child care for Service members and their families. I thank you for your strong support.

The Department has initiated outreach to universities and nonprofits for the purpose of developing recruitment and retention programs and to strengthen existing partnerships. These strategic efforts will enhance DoD's capacity to recruit and retain talented professionals in Child Development,

Youth Development, Counseling, Family Support, & Financial Management. In addition, outreach efforts designed to increase the number of students completing internships and pursuing professional careers are also under development. The Department is working with campus-based partnerships to identify promising or best practices, develop training programs, create campus-based seminars, colloquia, workshops, and distance learning and to provide research on the impact and quality of programs.

The Department continues to lead the nation with 98 percent of DoD Child Development Centers accredited by the National Academy of Early Childhood Programs, as compared to 8 – 10 percent of civilian child care centers. To be accredited, early childhood programs voluntarily undergo a comprehensive self-study and an external, professional review. Criteria are aimed at providing a safe and nurturing environment while promoting the physical, social, emotional and intellectual development of young children. Additionally, a report released by the National Association of Child Care Resources and Referral Agencies in March 2009 rated the DoD child care system oversight and standards as the top ranking among all 50 states and the District of Columbia with a score of 131 out of 150 points, 20 points

ahead of its nearest competitors (District of Columbia, Oklahoma, and Tennessee).

Youth Programs: DoD promotes positive youth development by designing programs to recognize the achievements of youth and by developing partnerships with other youth-serving organizations like the Boys & Girls Clubs of America and 4-H that offer a variety of resources. Programs prepare pre-teens and teenagers to meet the challenges of military life, adolescence, and adulthood. Recognizing that developing good financial habits needs to start earlier, we launched the Military Youth Financial Readiness Campaign as part of the Military Saves Week in 2008. In 2008, we had over 5,000 youth participants and this year that number grew to more than 7,000.

In June, DoD launched a new website, Military Youth on the Move, <http://apps.mhf.dod.mil/myom>, to replace Military Teens on the Move. This site is an easy to use resource that reaches out to youth with creative ways to cope with issues that arise in the face of a move, such as transitioning to a new school, saying goodbye to friends, and getting involved in a new community. The website is divided into three target audiences: elementary school, middle school, and high school. Users simply click on their age group to get started. Once inside the site, users search different topics that

pertain to both military youth in particular and youth in general. Moving once or repeatedly has a significant impact on our youth. Military Youth on the Move helps to make the transition as smooth as possible by giving them a safe place for information and advice.

To support military youth impacted by deployment, *Operation: Military Kids* (OMK), collaborated with the Joint Family Support Assistance Program in 15 pilot states. 4-H/Army Youth Development Project Youth Program Specialist staff assigned to support OMK trained 26,543 community members at Ready, Set, Go community events, informed 16,267 partners and decision-makers at Informational Briefings, trained 1,270 youth at Speak Out for Military Kids events, presented 2,264 Hero Packs to military youth, engaged 289 non-military youth, involved 1,946 military youth and 399 non-military youth, 1,835 family members and 387 community members at Mobile Technology Lab events, and involved 7,872 military youth in other youth program events.

DoD provided funds to OMK states for the expansion of OMK camping opportunities that advance the accomplishment of national OMK goals, support the Joint Family Support Assistance Program and enhance the effective implementation of OMK elements to reach more military youth. Thirty eight states with current OMK grants and the District of Columbia

will be eligible to apply for supplemental OMK Camp funding. Summer Camps are defined as weekend events, special focus camps (computer, conservation, leadership, etc.), day camps, school break retreats, or residential experiences of varying lengths organized and operated by OMK. The outcomes for military youth include opportunities, in a camp setting, to ease the stress associated with the deployment of a parent and to form a support network of military peers. The outcomes for parents include opportunities for youth to attend a no cost camping experience with other military youth impacted by deployment throughout their state and/or neighboring states.

Department of Defense Education Activity: Department of Defense Education Activity: A key quality of life issue is the education of military children. Service members often make decisions about assignments based on the availability of quality educational opportunities for their children. The Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) provides quality pre-kindergarten through 12th grade educational opportunities and services to military dependents around the globe, who would otherwise not have access to U.S.-accredited public education. *Of the approximately 1.2 million military school-age children, DoDEA educates nearly 85,000 in 192 schools in 12 foreign countries, seven states, Guam, and Puerto Rico with*

8,700 educators. The excellent ratio of educators to students (1:10 overall) contributes to the quality individual attention and education afforded throughout the DoDEA system. DoDEA also operates a tuition reimbursement program for military assigned overseas without a DoDEA school. Through the Educational Partnership Initiative and new technologies, DoDEA can expand its reach to the approximately 92% of military students who do not attend DoDEA Schools.

The ongoing relocation of thousands of military students through force structure changes has created an urgent need and responsibility to enrich and expand partnerships with military-connected communities to ensure the best possible educational opportunities for military children. DoDEA works collaboratively with the Secretary of Education to ease the transition of military students, to use DoDEA funds to share experience with local educational agencies (LEAs) who educate military students, and to provide programs such as distance learning and teacher training to LEAs with military students undergoing transition from force structure changes. DoDEA is developing a new approach to provide a fully accredited virtual school program for Grades 9-12 for eligible students. Beginning in School Year 2009-2010, DoDEA plans to increase course offerings within the existing distance learning program to implement a comprehensive accredited

virtual high school by School Year 2010-2011. A middle and upper elementary program is also planned for delivery in subsequent years.

Many of the school facilities within DoDEA have exceeded the life expectancy and do not meet today's educational standards. Schools are currently operating within structures that were erected in the 1930s through the 1960s. These aged buildings were either built for other purposes (i.e., barracks, administration buildings) or were constructed prior to major technological advances for the kindergarten to high school learning environment. Independent condition assessments indicate that it is more cost effective to replace these buildings than to upgrade or modernize them. Many are due for replacement in the next 10 years. Continued support of the DoDEA effort is needed and appreciated. This supports the Department's force management quality of life and retention goals of attracting and retaining the highest quality personnel.

DoDEA continues to make significant improvements to facilities due to gains in the facilities sustainment, restoration and modernization (FSRM) budget. In FY09 DoDEA, will meet the Department standard for FSRM with obligations of \$86 million; of this amount sustainment funding is \$72.6 million. The FY10 DoDEA FSRM budget is currently \$93.7 million with \$73.8 million allocated to sustainment. Both these figures are vast

improvements over FY08 and previous years. In FY08 the sustainment budget was \$55.8 million. The current and projected budget will allow DoDEA to target high-cost, priority repairs on roofs; heating, ventilation, and air conditioning; other critical systems that may be failing; and improvements to support technology requirements in the classrooms. Complimenting the O&M increase in FSRM is the increase to the DoDEA MILCON program. The FY09 DoDEA MILCON budget is \$102 million and the FY10 budget is programmed for \$208 million, a major increase from the previous DoDEA MILCON budgets of approximately \$45 million a year. This increase is attributed to Department recognition and support of DoDEA requirements. In the future, DoDEA plans to replace three to four schools a year as a well as meet new requirements.

New information today can make educational programs that were developed and implemented yesterday obsolete. To that end, DoDEA is conducting a multi-phased comprehensive program evaluation process to review the current status of its educational programs to develop recommendations to increase the impact of those programs as well as increase accountability and student achievement. Some programs can be modified to make them more effective, while others may have to be discontinued. The entire DoDEA staff will continually assess data and

review research to meet the needs of students to show continuous gains in student achievement.

The process of program evaluation follows the steps of planning, implementing, evaluating, reviewing, and refining. We look to you for your support in continuing this effort. This effort includes an assessment program that will align DoDEA's assessment of student achievement in accordance with state; administrative and teacher professional development programs to support data-driven differentiated instruction; and a comprehensive grade 9-12 Virtual School program by School Year 2010/11. This is a significant commitment to ensure the children of our uniformed service members are receiving the best education possible.

Many military installations have school liaison officers to advise military parents of school-aged children on educational issues and needs and to assist in solving education-related problems. School liaison officers are helping to identify barriers to academic success and develop solutions, promote parental involvement, develop and coordinate partnerships in education and provide parents with the tools they need to overcome obstacles to education that stem from the military lifestyle. The School liaison officer acts as an advocate and communication link between the

installation and the surrounding school districts to “level the playing field” for transitioning military children and youth. The purpose of the program is to provide a link between military families on and off - installation schools to assist them with those unique problems facing military children, i.e., PCS moves, deployments, varying graduation and records transfer requirements, differences in curriculum and schedules between stateside and overseas schools, and Department of Defense Schools and civilian schools. Their mission is to mobilize and utilize community resources to reduce the impact of the mobile military lifestyle on children/youth, implement predictable support services that assist children/youth with relocations, life transitions and achievement of academic success, and provide access for parents, children, youth, schools, commanders, and communities to a wide range of resources to facilitate school transitions.

Exceptional Family Member Program: Through the military medical departments, at no charge to families, DoD provides early intervention services, from birth until three years of age, to infants and toddlers who are developmentally delayed or at high risk for a developmental delay and who (but for age) are eligible to attend a DoD school. The DoD schools provide specially designed instruction, support,

and services to children with educational disabilities, who are three years of age and until they are 21 years of age. The DoD schools provide a full continuum of programs to meet the needs of children with disabilities in our military families. During the last six years, the DoD schools have focused on children with moderate to severe disabilities by purchasing new equipment and assistive technology devices and providing professional development for all special education personnel. The intent is for consistency in curriculum and instruction as families move from one DoD school to another. In response to the increased incidence of children with autism in our DoD schools, the DoD school system hired autism consultants to help design the curriculum and interventions for students with autism.

The Department publishes an annual directory to assist the medical and educational assignment coordinators to identify those military communities outside the continental United States with pre-established programs or services for children with special needs, including those with more serious needs, such as those with intellectual impairments, autism or physical disabilities such as blindness.

Recently, the Department embarked on a joint Service campaign to raise awareness of the Exceptional Family Member Program, the issues that these families face, and the resources available to address their needs.

Interstate Compact: The mobile military lifestyle creates tough challenges for children who attend, on average, six to nine different school systems from kindergarten to twelfth grade. To help overcome these issues, the Department is working with the states to implement the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children. A variety of federal, state and local officials as well as national stakeholder organizations helped develop this interstate agreement whose goal is to replace the widely varying treatment of transitioning military students with a comprehensive approach that provides a uniform policy on eligibility, enrollment, placement and graduation in every state that chooses to join.

Eleven states, Arizona, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Kansas, Kentucky, Michigan, Missouri, North Carolina and Oklahoma, adopted the compact in 2008. This was sufficient to activate the Compact and establish the Commission to finalize implementing rules and provide operational oversight. We have had an additional 14 states join in 2009: Alabama, Alaska, Hawaii, Indiana, Iowa, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Mississippi, Nevada, Ohio, Texas, Virginia, and Washington. The addition of these states brings the total number of member states to 25, which covers approximately 70% of military children. In addition, legislation is being actively considered in 3 states.

Predatory Lending Regulation: In 2006 the Department reported on high cost short term lending practices, and in the John Warner National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2007, the Congress authorized the Department to write a regulation to curtail these detrimental practices. The resulting regulation went into effect October 2007, and in the year and ten months since implemented, the regulation has curtailed the use of loans covered by the regulation, increased the likelihood that Service members and their families obtain assistance through banks, credit unions and the relief societies, and has provided an on-going opportunity for DoD to discuss consumer protection issues with Federal and state regulators.

Voluntary Education: The First Joint Service Graduation Ceremony in Iraq

Personal development is so ingrained in our culture that, even in a war zone, military personnel strive to continue their educational pursuits and personal improvement. To meet those needs, there are two full service Joint Education Centers operating in Iraq at Camp Victory and Camp Balad, with plans to open six more in the near future. Seven days a week, Service members may participate in traditional (instructor-led) on-the-ground classes, through Central Texas College, University of Maryland University College and Embry-Riddle Aeronautical, or via distance learning education.

The centers also provide an extensive testing program, improvement courses, and Leader Skill Enhancement Instruction Courses.

On 17 May 2009, beneath the United States flag in the rotunda of the Al Faw Palace in Baghdad, a Graduation Commencement Ceremony was conducted in Iraq – a first for any combat zone. This was the conclusion of a long journey for many of the Service members pursuing their educational goals. The degrees conferred represented all levels of mastery – associate, baccalaureate and masters.

All Service members deployed to Iraq who graduated in the 2008-2009 college year were invited to participate. Of the 130 identified as graduates, only 79 could participate in the ceremony due to operational reasons.

A tangible demonstration of the importance the military places on education, the graduation ceremony epitomized self improvement as a critical component of the warrior ethos. The warrior-scholars demonstrated their desire to pursue intellectual knowledge that will be applied in their job and to the military mission in Iraq.

Fitness: All of the military Services continue to expand and provide innovative fitness programs that sustain a physically fit, healthy force in our military communities and for deployed men and women around the world.

Long term plans will modernize the fitness infrastructure beginning with the Services' request for ten fitness center military construction projects in FY 2009 and another 71 fitness centers programmed through FY 2014. The inclusion of fitness facilities in the minor military construction authority would serve as a boost to facilitate future construction. Installation fitness facilities are one of the most important facilities on base for troops to release stress after returning from combat, combat obesity, and remain physically and mentally fit. Also, more and more, our installation fitness centers are becoming "family friendly." Many installation fitness centers are carving out space for supervised child care to assist parents who otherwise could not work out because of lack of available child care. Programming is being expanded to include older children/youth in classes to help foster a healthier lifestyle and combat obesity. The key initiative is ensuring our military members and their families are fit!

MWR Outreach

To promote a healthy lifestyle and expand the military MWR benefit to Active Duty, Guard and Reserve and their families who do not have access to installation MWR programs, we have contracted with the Armed Services YMCA to offer free YMCA family memberships at local, participating YMCAs to families of deployed Guard and Reserve Personnel,

Active Duty Service members and their families assigned to Independent Duty locations, any relocated spouse of a deployed Active Duty Service member and a limited number of families assigned to the Joint Base locations. In just nine months we funded over 19,000 memberships which include over 29,000 family members. Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive with comments such as *“with four children in tow, exercise would be impossible without child watch at the YMCA -thank you for finding military spouses/families worth it to use funds in this way”* and *“I have lost 30 pounds in just a couple of months since coming to the YMCA; I absolutely love it!”* We are expanding our marketing efforts to reach more families who meet the eligibility requirements.

We also created a DoD MWR Online Library with library resources in print, electronic and downloadable format for entertainment, learning or solace, available for free from Military OneSource, virtually anytime, anywhere. Resources include auto, home and small engine repair, Career Library, Peterson’s Life Long learning, Tumblebooks for kids, NetLibrary audio and e-books just to name a few. The online library is also available through the Military Services Portal. Again customer feedback has been excellent with comments such as *“You guys hit a home run with offering these books - great for the long plane rides to and from deployment - thank you for*

the great benefit!" and "Great job - love the free stuff." Supplemental funding has allowed us to renew these on-line resources for another year.

Communication Services in Combat Areas: The ability to communicate with family and friends is the number one factor in being able to cope with longer and more frequent deployments. Service members have free access to the non-secure military Internet by using their military e-mail address, including aboard ships. They also have free Internet access at 794 MWR Internet Cafes in Iraq and Afghanistan with 9,107 computers and 4,015 VOIP phones (with call rates of less than 4 cents a minute). To enhance MWR provided services, the Exchanges provide personal information services for a usage fee for this customer convenience. Back home, computers and Internet service located in our family support centers, recreation centers, libraries, and youth centers help ensure families can connect.

Additionally, the Exchanges contract for telephone services in combat zones, operating 72 calling centers with 1,536 phones in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Kuwait, plus calling centers on-board ships in theater. Rates are 45 cents per minute afloat and 15 cents per minute ashore. The Exchanges are in compliance with the Department of Defense policy and the law, which require that contracts for telephone service be awarded through competitive

procedures and include options to minimize costs to individual users. Where feasible, the contracts provide the flexibility to use a variety of phone cards.

MilitaryHOMEFRONT (www.militaryhomefront.dod.mil) is the DoD library of official information about quality of life programs for helping professionals and military families. The Homefront provides access to information about benefits, entitlements and programs available to military members and their families including policies, reports and directives on topics from child care to relocation, special needs to voluntary education, morale welfare and recreation to combat stress. MilitaryHOMEFRONT provides a searchable directory of educational programs and services and state-specific resources as well as hundreds of Autism and general disability resources. Parents who have children with autism can communicate directly with each other using HOMEFRONTConnections, a DoD social networking site available on MilitaryHOMEFRONT.

Further, DoD uses MilitaryHOMEFRONT to develop tools, accessible through both the Military OneSource and MilitaryHOMEFRONT websites, to assist families – including the very popular “Plan My Move” and “Military Installations.” Military Installations, an on-line directory within the website, provides access to points of contact for 56 activities on

installations worldwide, including the commissary, exchanges, MWR programs, child development centers and the military health care facilities.

Military OneSource Outreach: Six years of deployments and multiple deployments have prompted the Department of Defense to rethink methods and strategies to deliver family support. Two major issues drove the development of the new delivery system: 1) how do we meet the needs of the National Guard and Reserve families and those geographically dispersed, and 2) how can we meet the needs of commanders for surge support surrounding deployments.

Primary among those responses was the establishment of Military OneSource outreach, designed to provide Active Duty and Guard and Reserve Commanders the vehicles for surge support during deployments. The outreach efforts along with the Military OneSource 24/7/365 call center and web-site, provide the scaffolding for our outreach and support.

Military OneSource.com and Call Center: Launched in 2002, Military OneSource provides support services 24/7/365 to active duty, National Guard and Reserve component Service members and their families world-wide. The backbone of Military OneSource is toll-free confidential telephonic support and a website that provides interactive tools, educational materials, discussion boards, links to military and community resources, and

tax filing services, among other services. Testimony to its usefulness is the fact that over 800, 000 tax returns were prepared through Military OneSource this tax season, at no charge to service members.

Outreach Counseling offers Services members and families with confidential, short term, situational, problem solving assistance, instrumental for coping with normal reactions to the stressful situations created by deployments, family separations and reintegration.

Military OneSource offers confidential face-to-face, telephonic, and on-line counseling up to twelve sessions. *Telephonic and on-line counseling sessions are new and beginning to grow.*

The *Military and Family Life Consultant* (MFLC) program provides professional, confidential, and flexible service delivery on a 30-90 day rotational basis on military installations to meet surge support requirements and to support Guard and Reserve events.

Financial Counseling. Additionally, financial counseling is available, through both Military OneSource and the MFLC program, to assist with the financial concerns of military members and their families during all stages of the deployment cycle.

Financial Readiness Installation Roadshows. Installation workshops are delivered by request include information about budgeting, mortgage and foreclosure, debt reduction, saving and investing, identity theft and retirement planning.

Twenty-seven road shows have been conducted since November 2008.

Military Spouse Career Advancement Accounts. To jump start portable careers in health services, education, information technology, and financial services, DoD will provide up to \$6,000 per spouse to assist spouses in developing portable careers in fields such as nursing, teaching, real estate and banking. This, in turn, supports families in attaining their aspirations and goals that may be interrupted as a result of the mobile military lifestyle.

Outreach support to the National Guard and Reserve – Joint Family Support Assistance Program. A continuum of support and services for National Guard and Reserve members and their families during pre-deployment, deployment, post-deployment, reunion and reintegration. Services have reached 469,188 Service members and families over the last year. It is a support service multiplier by broadening the network of resources beyond those that exist on installations. This program also

supports the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program 30-60-90 day events during post-deployment.

Wounded Warrior Resource Call Center. Embedded in the Military OneSource Call Center, this feature provides Service members who have become wounded, ill or injured, as well as their families and their primary caregivers, with a single point of contact for referral to Services' resources. Assistance is provided with reporting deficiencies in covered military facilities, obtaining health care services, receiving benefits information and any other difficulties encountered.

Commissaries and Exchanges: The commissary and exchange programs are vital to mission accomplishment and, as components of the military compensation system, are important contributors to morale and readiness. The Defense Commissary Agency (DeCA) operates 255 commissaries around the world providing groceries and household products to military personnel, retirees, and their families at cost plus a five percent surcharge to fund commissary construction and equipment. Savings exceed 30 percent compared to commercial prices; savings that contribute nearly \$3,400 per year in disposable income for a family of four that does all of its grocery shopping at the commissary. Sales exceed \$5.8 billion; operations are funded by appropriations of \$1.3 billion. DeCA met or exceeded all

performance goals in Fiscal Year 2008 and is performing equally well in 2009, with year-to date sales above target. DeCA is bringing the commissary benefit to Guard and Reserve personnel who don't live near a commissary through their 222 on-site sales at Guard and Reserve locations. The three exchange systems - the Army and Air Force Exchange System (AAFES), the Navy Exchange System Command (NEXCOM) and the Marine Corps Exchange (MCX) - operate over 3,700 retail outlets at 300 military installations, in 89 contingency operations, and aboard 161 ships. The exchanges sell a wide range of goods and services and distribute about 70 percent of their profits to support MWR programs. Savings exceed 20 percent, not including sales tax savings. Soon, AAFES will deploy new mobile exchanges specially outfitted to serve Guard and Reserve units together with DeCA. In combat areas, the exchanges provide 129 retail operations ranging from exchanges to imprest funds, 228 name brand fast food outlets, 600 service concessions, and telephone services that minimize costs for deployed members to call home. The exchanges had sales of \$11.9 billion in FY 2008 with profits of \$523 million and project sales of \$13 billion in FY 2009.

The Department will continue to make family support a high priority. As the needs of Service members and their families evolve, the Department stands ready to improve the quality of life of its greatest resource – people.

In conclusion, thank you for your support of the dedicated men and women who chose the highest calling of public service in defense of our nation. We share a passion for improving the quality of life of our soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines and their families.

Statement

**Cory Lyman Colonel, USAF
Assistant Director, Individual and Family Support Policy
For Manpower & Personnel
Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense
for Reserve Affairs**

HEARING

Before the

**House Armed Services Committee
Subcommittee on Personnel**

“Family Programs”

**22 July, 2009
10:00 A.M.**

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COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
MILITARY PERSONNEL SUBCOMMITTEE

COLONEL CORY H. LYMAN

Colonel Cory Harline Lyman assumed the duties of the Assistant Director for Individual and Family Support Policy in the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs on March 12, 2008. Prior to this assignment Colonel Lyman served in key positions in the National Guard Bureau. His responsibilities have included the following: Chief, Air National Guard Office of Cultural Transformation (Dec 2006-Mar 2008); Chief, Plans and Operations in the National Guard Family Program Office (Jul 2005-Nov 2006); and ANG, Military Equal Opportunity Program Manager (Jun 2001-Jul 2004).



Colonel Lyman successfully completed Air Command and Staff College, Maxwell AF Base, Alabama (1998-99) and The Industrial College of the Armed Forces at the National Defense University, Fort McNair, District of Columbia (2004-05).

After having completed Basic Military Training as an Honor Graduate in 1981, Colonel Lyman began his military career as an enlisted member. In 1987, he entered the Academy of Military Science at McGhee-Tyson Air National Guard Base, TN and as a distinguished graduate he received his commission as a Second Lieutenant. Prior to his order to active duty service, Colonel Lyman completed 19 years as a traditional Guard member in the Utah Air National Guard where he served in the Family Support Program during Desert Shield/Desert Storm, followed by service as a Public Affairs officer; and as the Chief, Equal Opportunity.

Colonel Lyman attended the University of Utah and received a Bachelors Degree in Music Education in 1985 and a Master of Social Work Degree in 1987. He practiced for 14 years as a Clinical Social Worker at two different University psychological service centers while maintaining a private practice. Midway through his professional practice Colonel Lyman returned to pursue further education and received his Doctor of Philosophy degree in Social Work from the University of Utah (1997). He now resides in Northern Virginia with his wife and five children. Col Lyman is the recipient of the Air Force Meritorious Service Medal, Air Force Commendation Medal (1 Oak Leaf Cluster) and the Air Force Achievement Medal.

Testimony House Armed Services Committee (Subcommittee on Personnel)
By Colonel Cory Lyman
July 22, 2009

Chairwoman Davis, Congressman Wilson, and members of the subcommittee: thank you for your invitation to discuss the status of Family Programs from the Reserve Affairs' perspective.

Great responsibilities have been placed on the shoulders of Guard and Reserve members and their families. These increasing demands have been accompanied by visionary and effective deployment cycle support systems for Reservists and their families.

On behalf of the Department of Defense, I express deep appreciation for the unflagging support given by this committee to the care and support of dedicated and patriotic Reserve Component members and to their marvelous families who also serve and sacrifice.

Reserve component Family Programs address Reservist family issues that differ in meaningful ways from the needs of Active component families. For instance, Reserve component families are community-based and connected; they are also dispersed geographically throughout more than 4000 communities nationwide. These realities create challenges and also offer great opportunities to link with community resources.

As they return from deployment, Reserve component members and their families experience satisfying and rewarding reunions that also may include some very real obstacles and challenges. To help Reserve component members throughout the

deployment cycle, the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program was developed. This program is focused on the Reserve component member and works hand-in-hand with the Family Program to enhance family readiness and help to smooth the potential challenges of military deployments.

We are committed to the success of the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program and we appreciate the committee's continued support of this visionary program.

We will continue to expand our collaboration efforts with the many agencies and programs (see diagram attached) that help deliver critical Family Program and Yellow Ribbon resources to every Guard and Reserve member and their family members nationwide.

With regard to the currency of family support policies, the Department of Defense seeks to maintain policies that provide full deployment-cycle-support to members of the Reserve component and their families. Department directives and instructions that are published to support the Family Program are, in my opinion, sufficient to the present and anticipated future demands. However, there are currently several policy revisions and actions underway. Specifically, a DoD instruction is now in coordination that will replace Directive Type Memorandum 08-029, dated July 22, 2008. This memorandum launched the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program and the DoD instruction should be ready for release in eight to ten weeks. Also, Military Community and Family Policy is currently circulating a draft Directive on Military Family Readiness (to update DoDD 1342.17, December 30, 1988, *Family Policy*). These policies support vital programs to ensure the readiness of the members and families in the National Guard and Reserve.

For military families the impact of deployment “ripples” through the lives of spouses, children, parents, grandparents, siblings and significant others. Because of their geographic dispersion and community-based roots, Reserve component members and their families experience some unique impacts of military service including challenges posed to command communication and access of families to support services. These challenges are addressed through extensive outreach efforts by family support professionals and dedicated Family Program volunteers, by extensive web-based resources (e.g.; guardfamily.org, militaryhomefront.dod.mil), by 24-7 toll free support and referral programs (e.g.; militaryonesource), and by committed and caring commanders who also understand that family support is a vitally important readiness issue.

DoD-sponsored programs are also established to support our Reserve component families across the deployment cycle. As mentioned earlier, the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program (YRRP) is a core deployment support program. Its resources are generally situated at the National Guard Joint Force Headquarters in all 50 States and 4 Territories; this program is available to serve all Reserve component members and their families. In less than a year of operation, the DoD Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program has tracked the completion of 1,350 reintegration events and has delivered critical information to over 129,000 Reserve Component members and their families. The Department works continually with partners such as the Department of Labor, Department of Veteran’s Affairs and the Small Business Administration to improve existing programs and initiate new efforts to support members and their families. For

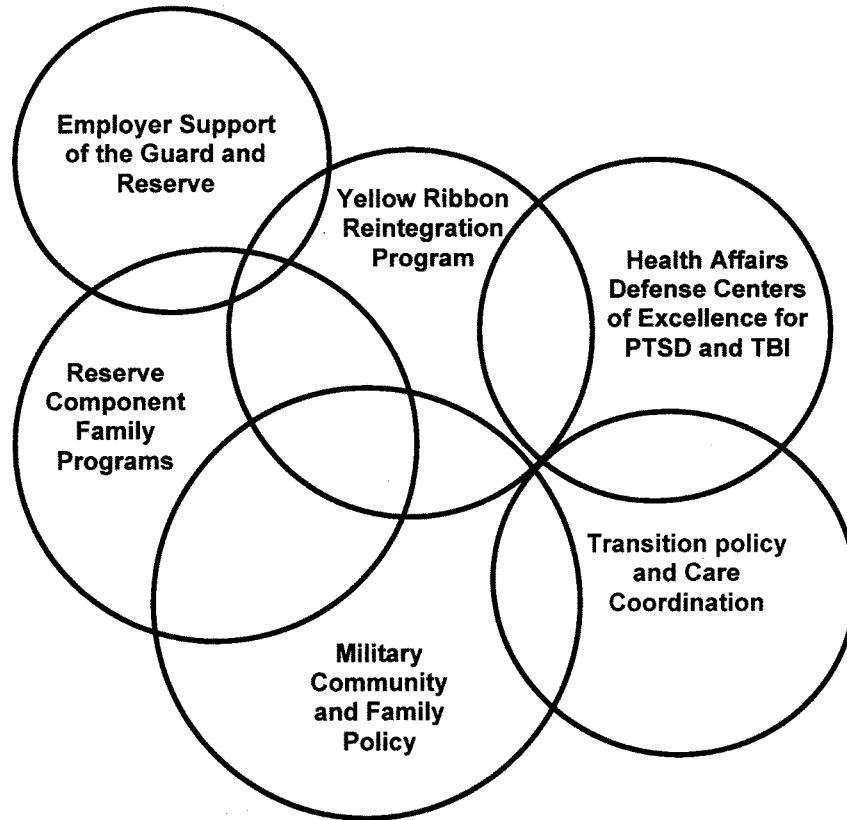
example, in cooperation with our Federal partners, a Yellow Ribbon Entrepreneurial Support Program is now under development. Finally, Military Community and Family Policy is now finalizing plans to add support teams called “Joint Family Support Assistance Program” teams (or JFSAP teams) at appropriate Reserve component HQs to further facilitate their contact with Reservist families. These JFSAP teams are established in all States and Territories and include Master’s Degree-level Military Family Life Consultants (MFLC) and Military OneSource consultants.

From time to time, Reservists may face employment and re-employment challenges where the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve offers valuable resources and intervention. Likewise, Reservists sometimes experience interruptions to their education and there are a range of DoD and private support programs in place to assist (e.g.; Servicemember Opportunity Colleges, Montgomery GI Bill, and DoD Tuition Assistance programs).

The Department of Defense recognizes the enormous sacrifices made by members of the Guard and Reserve to serve our country and we know that some sacrifices result in life-long changes and challenges. With that in mind, I mention efforts to support wounded, ill and injured service members and their families who require resources and healing. Well-developed programs for the Wounded, Ill and Injured are established in the Active Component and these support National Guard and Reserve members who suffer injuries during deployments. Such programs include the Army and the Air Force Wounded Warrior programs, as well as, the Marine Wounded Warrior Regiment, and the Navy Safe Harbor program. In addition, each of the Reserve components have appointed

a headquarters-level director of psychological health, along with qualified mental health practitioners in the field to help in the assessment and referral of those who are coping with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) or Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI). These efforts are augmented by resources such as the increasingly well-known and widely used Military OneSource; add to this the innovation of the well-developed Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury, and finally the DoD Wounded Warrior Resource Center with its 24/7 toll free help line (1-800-342-9647).

Thank you again for the opportunity to speak with you today about these vitally important programs and efforts to maintain the trust and keep faith with our dedicated National Guard and Reserve members and their families. We are grateful for your essential interest and support. I look forward to answering your questions.



Inter-Relationship of Family Programs

RECORD VERSION

STATEMENT BY

**KENNETH O. PRESTON
SERGEANT MAJOR OF THE ARMY**

BEFORE THE

**SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY PERSONNEL
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

FIRST SESSION, 111TH CONGRESS

ON ARMY FAMILY SUPPORT PROGRAMS

JULY 22, 2009

**NOT FOR PUBLICATION
UNTIL RELEASED
BY THE COMMITTEE ON
ARMED SERVICES**

STATEMENT BY
KENNETH O. PRESTON
SERGEANT MAJOR OF THE ARMY

Mr. Chairman and committee members, I want to thank you for this opportunity to sit before you today and represent the 1.1 million men and women of America's Army.

Your support in the past year and your continued support today have had a tremendous impact on our Army's ability to prevail in the Nation's war against terrorism. Your support allows us to ensure our Soldiers are fully prepared for their missions and to support their Family members who wait patiently for their Soldiers to come home.

Today, the American Soldier is busier than ever. We currently have more than 260,000 Soldiers forward deployed to 80 countries around the world. We have over 150,000 deployed to Kuwait, Iraq, Afghanistan and the Horn of Africa in Brigade Combat Teams (BCTs), multi-functional brigades, functional brigades and other force enabling units. Additionally, 260,000 Army Civilians are performing critical missions in support of the Army. More than 4,100 of our Civilians and more than 33,000 U.S. contractors are forward-deployed, performing vital missions abroad. In addition, there are 67,300 of our National Guard and 30,900 Reserve Soldiers mobilized today, serving all around the world. Soldiers deployed to the Horn of Africa are training the Djiboutian and other armies, while denying terrorists a sanctuary in which to run their terrorist camps. Soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan take the fight to the enemy every day while recruiting, training, and equipping their armies and police forces to provide a safe and secure environment for their citizens.

During the past year, I traveled to visit, speak, and listen to Soldiers and their Families all over the world. I have seen daily the tremendous work and sacrifices of the American Soldier, our Army Civilians and their Families. The culture of innovation fostered by our young men and women in Iraq and Afghanistan continues to show the American spirit of ingenuity, even under the most challenging of environments.

Family Programs

Recognizing the commitment and increasing sacrifices that our Families are making every day, on April 17, 2008, we launched the Army Community Covenant. The Army Community Covenant is a partnership with civic leaders at both local and state levels with our installation leaders. Local communities and installations signed Community Covenants over the past year at all installations around the world. The Covenant recognizes the commitment Soldiers and their Families are making every day, and the strength of the Community comes from the support of Employers, Educators, Civic and Business leaders, and their Citizens, partnering with our installation leaders to enhance quality of life.

The Army Family Covenant

Recognizing that the strength of our Army comes from the strength of our Army Families, the Army leadership unveiled the Army Family Covenant in October 2007. The Covenant institutionalizes the Army's commitment to provide Soldiers and Families – Active, Guard, and Reserve – a quality of life equal to their level of commitment and service and recognizes the important sacrifices they make every day to defend the Nation. The Covenant compels the Army to improve Soldier and Family readiness by standardizing Soldier and Family programs and services, increasing accessibility to health care, improving Soldier and Family housing, ensuring excellence in schools and child and youth services, and expanding education and employment opportunities for Family members. The Army Family Covenant conveys our commitment in seven general areas: standardizing Family programs; increasing access and quality of health care; improving Soldier and Family housing; ensuring excellence in our schools, youth services, and child care facilities; expanding education and employment opportunities for Family Members; improving Soldier quality of life in recreation, travel, and the Better Opportunities for Single Soldiers program; and improving relationships with local communities and marketplaces. In FY08, the Army committed \$1.4 billion to our existing Family Programs creating an immediate, positive impact on our Families.

The Army Family Covenant incorporated programs designed to build resilience of Children and Adolescents through improved services and programs that mitigate depression, anxiety, behavioral problems, and the stress of frequent military moves. The Army Family Covenant hired 161 additional School Liaison Officers and 72 Child Behavioral Consultant at 44 high operational tempo Garrison installations. The Covenant assigned 67 Military Family Life Consultants to the 2009 Summer Enrichment Programs. We established the Military Child and Adolescent Center of Excellence (MCACOE) at Madigan Army Medical Center at Fort Lewis, Washington. The MCACOE develops and implements best practices from military and civilian programs to support children of Soldiers.

We hired 1,079 new Family Readiness Support Assistants to provide additional support to Family Readiness Groups in deployable units across the Army. As members of the brigade or battalion commander's staff, FRSAs coordinate FRG activities within units and update commanders on program status and services available to Soldiers and their Families. FRSAs link Family members with other Army support agencies and programs. FRSAs serve as the linchpin between the commander, the FRG leader, and the installation to ensure all participants are linked and supported.

FRSAs assist with the preparation of pre-deployment and redeployment activities, schedule and coordinate Family readiness or unit-sponsored training, assist in development and distribution of unit newsletters, coordinate video teleconferences for Families and deployed Soldiers, and serve as links between garrison community agencies and units. FRSAs utilize Army One Source to gather information of value for the FRG leaders. The FRSA position remains in place when the unit is not deployed, providing continuity in a world climate that requires units to participate in multiple deployments. We supported 249 enduring Army National Guard Family Assistance Centers to assist Soldiers and Families in accessing support services regardless of their geographic locations.

The Army Family Covenant is in its second year, and the commitment is enduring. The Soldier and Family Action Plan provides the roadmap to review and strengthen existing programs and services. Although there is much work to do, the Army has made significant progress in improving Soldier and Family programs; health care; housing; child, youth, and school services; recreation; education; and employment opportunities. We have closed the staffing gaps in Army Community Service, and we are systematically evaluating Family programs through surveys, feedback, and focus groups in order to calibrate services to address customer needs.

The Army Family Covenant continues a legacy of service and support to Soldiers and Families. It reflects a continuum of Army dedication to sustain and partner with Soldiers and their Families to build an environment where they can prosper and realize their potential, all essential in sustaining an All-Volunteer Force.

Army Community Covenant

Recognizing the commitment and increasing sacrifices that our Families are making every day, on April 17, 2008, we launched the Army Community Covenant. The Army Community Covenant is a partnership with civic leaders at both local and state levels with our installation leaders. Local communities and installations signed 60 Community Covenants over this year at all installations and communities around the world with 23 scheduled through November 2009. The Covenant recognizes the commitment Soldiers and their Families are making every day, and the strength of the Community comes from the support of Employers, Educators, Civic and Business leaders, and their Citizens, partnering with our installation leaders to enhance quality of life.

Soldier and Family Assistance Centers

The Army developed Soldier and Family Assistance Centers (SFACs) at installations with Warrior Transition Units (WTUs). Centers provide a safe haven where Warriors in Transition and DoD Civilians and their Families can gather for

mutual support and camaraderie to aid physical, spiritual, and mental healing. Services include transition support, financial counseling, child care and education counseling. SFACs act as a conduit for other federal, state, local and non-governmental agencies.

Military One-Source

Military One-Source continues to be a multi-component approach for community support and services to meet the diverse needs of Soldiers and Families. The Army further developed Army One Source (AOS) to provide Soldiers and their Families the service specific care they require to sustain themselves. AOS integrates Family Programs and services for all Active, Guard, and Reserve Soldiers, and Families. AOS provides Soldiers and their Families single portal access for all programs and services. AOS provides 24-hours a day, 7-days per week toll-free information, referral telephone line and internet based services. We released the eArmy Family Messaging System, a key component of AOS. The eArmy Family Messaging System is a state of the art, multi-media tool for deployed commanders to improve communication with Army Soldiers and Family members at home by mail and Short Message Service (SMS) text messages. AOS provides 14 baseline services at the installations' Army Community Services office, National Guard Family Assistance Centers and Reserve Readiness Centers. In FY08, AOS received more than 20 million visitors per month. To date, there are more than 125,000 registered users Army wide.

To support Families geographically dispersed away from traditional installations, we initiated a Virtual Family Readiness Group (vFRG). The vFRG is a web-based system that provides all of the functionality of a traditional FRG in an on-line setting to meet the needs of those geographically dispersed units and families. Unlike traditional FRGs that are immediately located with the unit, the vFRG links the deployed Soldier, their Family, the FRG leader, the unit commander, the rear detachment, and other Family readiness personnel on their own controlled access web portal. The vFRG facilitates the exchange of

information and provides a sense of community, using technology to automate manual processes and provide enhanced services and communications. Over 1,300 vFRGs have been established, linking Families on the home front to those forward deployed.

The Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program (YRRP) provides support for Soldiers and Families of the National Guard and Army Reserve to make them self-reliant and resilient throughout the entire deployment cycle. The deployment cycle includes all phases of pre-deployment, deployment, demobilization, and post-deployment reconstitution. The YRRP consists of 30, 60, and 90-day post-deployment requirements that are hosted at conferences at no cost for Soldiers and Family Members. YRRP includes partnerships with all military support services within the state; all major veteran service organizations, all relevant state government departments and agencies, civilian organizations established to assist military families, relevant community service organizations, and organizations with a role in disaster response. In FY 2009, 800 YRRP events were held nation-wide. More than 45,000 Soldiers and 51,000 Family Members were served.

Medical Care

TRICARE is the health care program serving the Active, Guard and Reserve members, retirees, their Families, survivors and certain former spouses worldwide. As a major component of the Military Health System, TRICARE brings together the health care resources of the uniformed services and supplements them with networks of civilian health care professionals, institutions, pharmacies and suppliers to provide access to high-quality health care services while maintaining the capability to support military operations.

TRICARE Reserve Select (TRS) is a premium based health plan that qualified Guard and Reserve members may purchase unless eligible for coverage under the Federal Employees Health Benefits program if either the member or spouse is eligible to purchase the FEHB then the member and family are not eligible to purchase TRS. TRS offers coverage similar to TRICARE

Standard and TRICARE Extra, and a monthly premium is charged at \$47.51 for the Soldier or \$180.17 for the Soldier and Family. They receive comprehensive coverage with access to TRICARE-authorized providers. They may access care from a military treatment facility on a space-available basis only.

TRICARE currently has 9.4 million eligible beneficiaries worldwide. There are 59 military hospitals, 413 medical clinics, and 413 dental clinics. For active duty members, Purchased Care Systems provide medical treatment for small populations of Soldiers, areas of rapid growth of Soldier populations, distance to a Military Treatment Facility is too far or the needed medical service is not available at the military treatment facility. Our Army medical facilities are consistently accredited by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Health Care Organizations and are well maintained and operated. Medical technology is advancing at an enormous pace, and DoD is continually evaluating how to ensure the medical treatment facility infrastructure continues to support the demands of modern medicine while providing the most efficient and patient focused facilities to support our wounded warriors, family members and retirees. Soldiers and Family members routinely list access to quality medical care as a priority to them and as one of the main reasons they opt to stay with the Army Team.

We created 32 Warrior Transition Units to support more than 9,000 wounded, ill, or injured Soldiers, with a singular focus on warrior healing and support to their Army Families. We established 9 community-based health care organizations to help our wounded, ill, and injured Soldiers focus on their treatment, rehabilitation, and transition. We enhanced care for mild Traumatic Brain Injury (mTBI) and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and conducted a TBI/PTSD chain teaching program for all Soldiers and Families. The chain teaching program focused on educating Soldiers and leaders about the symptoms of TBI/PTSD and to work towards eliminating the stigma associated with asking for help.

Survivor Outreach Services

Survivor Outreach Services (SOS) provides a standardized, multi-agency, decentralized approach to improving support for Survivors of Fallen Soldiers in communities closest to where Families live. The program standardizes services for Survivors and provides trained experts in benefits counseling, financial counseling, grief counseling, and casualty assistance. The SOS process also places emphasis on the Soldier's responsibility to prepare, prior to deployment, for the possibility of death. This preparation involves the Soldier, the Soldier's spouse, children, and extended Family. SOS supports Soldier and Family readiness during and after the painful and devastating experience of the loss of a loved one.

SOS provides support to Casualty Assistance Officers to ensure Families receive the most current information on benefits and entitlements and have access to long-term financial and emotional support. Legal support for survivors includes estate planning, will preparation, probate planning, and assistance in preparing estate-related tax documents.

Service delivery strategies include a variety of services such as Web-based accessibility, outreach, face-to-face, and group services. SOS is available 24/7 with foreign language and special needs accommodation capabilities. Services are offered at stateside, overseas, and geographically dispersed locations.

The Army Family Action Plan

The Army recently celebrated the 25th Anniversary of the creation of the Army Family Action Plan (AFAP). On August 15, 1983, Army Chief of Staff General John A. Wickham published a groundbreaking white paper *The Army Family*, which identified the need for the Army to increase support to its Families. General Wickham asserted that a healthy Family environment allows Soldiers to concentrate more on their mission. He set a new vision and course for Army Families that carries on to this day.

The mission of the AFAP is to help Army leaders address the needs and concerns of the Army Family from a grass roots perspective. The program uses Army Family representatives from around the world to identify issues that will improve the standard of living for Soldiers and Families. This feedback to leaders provides a way for policy change to become a tangible end-product for the Army Family. It addresses quality of life issues for Soldiers, retirees, Department of Army Civilian employees, and their Family members, and now includes Warriors in Transition (WT) and Survivors of Fallen Soldiers. The Army remains committed to AFAP as a means for Soldiers and Families to let the Army know what works, what does not, and what they think will fix it.

During AFAP's 25 years, 651 issues have been worked by the Army. Of those: 84 are active, five have been combined with other active issues; 442 have been completed; and 120 have been determined to be unattainable. AFAP issues have resulted in 110 legislative changes, 155 changes to Department of Defense (DoD) or Army policies; and 177 new or improved programs or services. Over 60 percent of AFAP issues impact all Services. The majority AFAP issues are related to force support (32 percent), followed by medical (21 percent), relocation (20 percent), Family support (17 percent), and youth (10 percent).

As a result of Congressional legislation passed in 2008, three of the most critical active AFAP issues were successfully resolved: Distribution of the Montgomery G.I. Bill Benefits to Family Members, Paternity Permissive Temporary Duty, and In-State College Tuition. Thank you for hearing and supporting our Families' issues by passing this legislation.

Quality of life and support to Soldiers and Families will remain a primary focus through AFAP and the Army Family Covenant. AFAP will continue to support the Army Family as emerging quality of life issues are brought to the Army leadership for resolution. AFAP will continue to be the "Voice of the Army Family," taking on issues such as increasing support for Warriors in Transition and Survivors of the Fallen, refining Soldier Family Action Plan tasks, and reaching out to geographically dispersed Soldiers and Families.

Military families routinely move from installation to installation both here in the U.S. and overseas. These frequent moves pose unique challenges to the Families of school aged children. These challenges include the transfer of records and credit, course sequencing, graduation requirements, redundant or missed entrance exams, and kindergarten and first grade entrance age variations. The average military child averages two moves during their high school years and can experience six to nine different school systems in their lives from kindergarten through 12th grade. The Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, in cooperation with the Council of State Governments, drafted a Department of Defense Interstate Compact that addresses these issues. The Compact is now active in 25 states with Ohio being the last state to sign on July 20, 2009. I ask your support and emphasis for this critical state legislation as it deals directly with our school-aged children, removes barriers to educational success imposed on the children of all Military Families, and allows for a more uniformed treatment of Military children transferring between school districts and states.

Army Child, Youth, and School Services

Army Child, Youth, and School Services (CYSS) are an immeasurable force multiplier. CYSS's is mission essential for our Soldiers and Families in helping to reduce the conflict between their responsibilities as parents and their mission as Soldiers. Several factors contribute significantly to the necessity of child care and youth supervision for our Families. Military Families are generally younger than the average American family and are often separated from their own extended family support system. Forty-eight percent of Soldiers who deploy have children under the age of two. Soldiers' duties require child care and youth supervision options up to 10 to 14 hours a day including early mornings, evenings, and weekends. Remote duty stations and overseas locations often lack adequate care options, when one spouse deploys we create a geographical single parent. Last year, CYSS expanded deployment cycle support by increasing operating hours for Child and Youth Service Programs and increased

respite care from 5 to 16 hours per child per month. Child Development Centers offer more hourly and respite child care services to help parents and guardians find the time to address personal needs such as medical appointments or to have a break from the stress of being a geographical single parent during the deployment cycle. Families of deployed Soldiers have the opportunity to access and receive respite child care at no cost. CYSS eliminated registration fees and reduced other program fees to ease the financial burden of Families. CYSS increased support for Warriors in Transition such as no-cost hourly child care to Families and caregivers during medical appointments. To help meet the increasing demand for available spaces, the Army added 72 centers in FY08 with an additional 11 centers programmed for fiscal years 2010 through 2014.

Since Army Child, Youth, and School Services are critical to the Army's All Volunteer Force, we plan to construct 8 permanent Child Development Centers in FY09. The Army Chief of Staff directed that Army Child Care Programs reach an end state of providing 80 percent of the demand by the end of FY09 (from an original target date of FY13). Soldiers consistently rate these two programs as important to their Family's quality of life and heavily weight these programs to their decision to remain with the Army Team. Army Child, Youth, and School Services programs send a clear message that the Army cares about Families, wants to minimize Soldier and spouse lost duty time, wants to influence Soldier and spouse decisions to stay with the Army team, to allow Soldiers and spouses to concentrate on their jobs, and provide positive growth and development opportunities for children.

Better Opportunities for Single Soldiers

The mission of the Better Opportunities for Single Soldiers (BOSS) program is to enhance the morale and welfare of single Soldiers, increase retention, and sustain combat readiness. BOSS is the collective voice of single Soldiers through the chain of command. The program also serves as a tool for commanders to gauge the morale of single Soldiers regarding quality of life issues. BOSS also sponsors a variety of activities before, during, and after

deployment to maintain the morale of single Soldiers affected by increased operational tempo and deployment stress.

The BOSS program consists of three core components aimed at maintaining a balanced life: leisure and recreation, community service, and quality of life. BOSS affords Soldiers the opportunity to assist in planning and execution of recreational activities for single Soldiers and provides direction for Soldiers interested in performing military and civilian community service-related projects. Community service projects provide Soldiers valuable experience, skills, and a sense of community pride and ownership. In FY07, 22 garrison BOSS programs received the President's Volunteer Service Award for efforts representing over 150,574 volunteer hours.

The BOSS program also serves as a tool to address many of the issues and concerns that our Army faces today. The program gives the Army the ability to tackle tough issues through peer-to-peer leadership. Single Soldiers assist the chain of command in dealing with suicide prevention, sexual assault, and sexual harassment issues that single Soldiers living in barracks might experience.

Our Installations are the Army home to our American Soldiers. The quality of life for all our Soldiers and Families is an inseparable element of our readiness posture. To improve quality of life, we focused our initiatives and our resources on the areas most important to our Soldiers and Families.

One of the Army's key strategies to improve Family housing is the application and use of privatized housing where practical. The Residential Communities Initiative (RCI) is providing quality, modern, state of the art housing in communities that our Soldiers and their Families can proudly call home. RCI became a critical component in our effort to eliminate inadequate Family housing and has made a significant positive impact in improving our Soldiers' and Families' quality of life. By the end of FY09, we will have privatized 80,000 homes at 43 installations. Our FY10 request for family privatized housing will provide 1,900 new homes. Our RCI program began in 1999, and is on a glide path to successful completion. Our housing strategy is working!

The Way Ahead

In closing, I want to recognize the amazing work being done by our Soldiers and Army Civilians around the globe. Soldiers represent what is best of our Nation and work to build lasting relationships wherever they deploy. Soldiers today are the greatest of their generation. Like our Veterans throughout our 234 year history, we will feel the impact of their service for many years to come. Every generation has its heroes, and this one is no different.

We announced 2009 as the Year of the NCO. During this year, we will accelerate previously approved strategic NCO development initiatives that enhance training, education, capability, and utilization of our NCO Corps. We will showcase the NCO story for the Army and the American people to honor the sacrifices and celebrate the contributions of the NCO Corps, past and present.

Our NCOs lead the way in education, training, and discipline. They share their strength of character with every Soldier they lead, every officer they serve, and every civilian they support.

Thank you again for your continued support of our Soldiers and their Families. We have made great strides by your commitment to improve their quality of life. We still have challenges but with your help, I am positive we can continue to take care of our Army family.

I appreciate this opportunity to speak before you today and represent "America's Army" and all it stands for. Thank you.

**Not public until
Released by the
House Armed Services Committee**

**STATEMENT OF
SERGEANT MAJOR CARLTON W. KENT
SERGEANT MAJOR OF THE MARINE CORPS
HEADQUARTERS, UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
BEFORE THE
HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY PERSONNEL
ON
OVERSIGHT OF FAMILY SUPPORT PROGRAMS
ON
JULY 22, 2009**

**Not public until
Released by the
House Armed Services Committee**



Sgt. Maj. Kent completed recruit training at Marine Corps Recruit Depot, Parris Island, S.C., in March 1976 and was assigned to the 1st Marine Brigade. In May 1978, Sgt. Maj. Kent was transferred to Marine Security Guard Battalion where he served as a Marine Security Guard. He served at American Embassy, Kinshasa, Zaire and Panama. In June 1981, Sgt. Maj. Kent transferred to Fort Benning for Airborne School and Parachute Riggers School at Fort Lee, Va. In June of 1982 he was assigned as 2nd Air Delivery Platoon Commander, and parachute rigger billets in various commands aboard Camp Lejeune, N.C.

In February 1983, Sgt. Maj. Kent was transferred to Marine Corps Recruit Depot, San Diego, Calif., for duty as a drill instructor, senior drill instructor and battalion drill master with First Battalion. In January 1985, he was meritoriously promoted to Gunnery Sergeant. In May 1985, Sgt. Maj. Kent transferred to 3rd Air Delivery Platoon as Platoon Sergeant. In June 1986 he transferred to Engineer Company, BSSG-1 1st Marine Brigade, Hawaii, as Company Gunnery Sergeant. In March 1988, Sgt. Maj. Kent was assigned to Noncommissioned Officers School, 1st Marine Brigade as the NCOIC.

In February 1989, Sgt. Maj. Kent transferred to Marine Corps Recruit Depot, Parris Island, S.C., as a student at Drill Instructor School. After completion of Drill Instructor School, Sgt. Maj. Kent was assigned to Naval Aviation Officers Candidate School in Pensacola, Fla., as a Drill Instructor, Chief Drill Instructor, and First Sergeant. In February 1990, Sgt. Maj. Kent was promoted to First Sergeant and assigned as First Sergeant, MATSG, Pensacola, Fla.

In June 1992, he transferred to 4th Marine Regiment for duty. In June 1993, he transferred to the Army Sergeants Major Academy, Fort Bliss, Texas. After graduation, in February 1994 he was transferred and assigned as First Sergeant, Battery L, 3rd Battalion, 12th Marine Regiment. In December 1994, he assumed the duties as Sergeant Major, 3rd Battalion, 12th Marine Regiment. In August 1997, Sgt. Maj. Kent was transferred to the Marine Corps Recruit Depot, San Diego, Calif., where he was assigned duties as Sergeant Major 2nd Recruit Training Battalion and in September 1999 as Sergeant Major Recruit Training Regiment.

In May 2001, he was transferred to Marine Forces Europe/FMF Europe, Stuttgart, Germany, where he was assigned the duties as the Sergeant Major of Marine Forces Europe. In April 2004, he was transferred to I Marine Expeditionary Force, Camp Pendleton, Calif., to serve as the Sergeant Major of the I Marine Expeditionary Force. Sgt. Maj. Kent assumed his current post as the 16th Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps on 25 April 2007.

Madam Chairwoman, Ranking Member Wilson, and Distinguished Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for this opportunity to report on the status of the family support programs affecting the quality of life and the well-being of our Marines and their families. To echo the Commandant, "Our Corps' most sacred resource is the individual Marine." Our success as an institution is inextricably linked to enabling the readiness of our Marines and their families through investments in our quality of life programs.

We remain a Corps of Marines at war with over 27,000 Marines deployed in support of Operations IRAQI FREEDOM and ENDURING FREEDOM. The young men and women who fill our ranks today recognize the global, protracted, and lethal nature of the challenges facing our Nation, and their dedicated service and sacrifice are in keeping with that of the generations preceding them. These Marines and their families know that their sacrifices are making a difference, that they are part of something much larger than themselves, and that their Nation stands behind them. We are grateful for the unending support of the Congress and American people.

The Marine Corps Family

Today, the Marine Corps Family is more than just the traditional nuclear family definition of parents and children; for example we now consider parents of single Marines when developing our family programs. For active duty families within the nuclear definition, we have just over 94,000 spouses and 110,077 children. Marines are also caring for parents and other dependents totaling over 500, bringing our entire family population to nearly 205,000. This does not include the over 100,000 retired Marines and their families we support. We should also note that the Marine Corps has experienced a baby boom with a 12 percent increase in infants, pre-toddlers and toddlers since 2007.

Marine families experience multiple deployment separations and increased operational tempo, which directly impact the sponsor's time with family. Concerns of danger and worry over family conditions are mutually shared by the warfighters, their spouses, children and parents/grandparents. The Marine Corps has the youngest fighting force and youngest families. These young families are required to mature rapidly and are those at the greatest risk for set back.

Our Marine families, including activated reserves and independent duty Marines, are dispersed and do not live solely on or around Marine Corps or other military installations. For example, our activated Reserve families are more likely to remain in hometowns scattered across every state, creating challenges for civilian not equipped to help these families navigate the challenges of this military lifestyle.

From our Quality of Life in the Marine Corps Study, we know that Marine Corps families are proud of their Marines and believe in their mission to protect and defend the Nation. Marines and families understand the commitment to the Marine Corps comes with a sacrifice and stress to family well-being inherent in this worthy mission. The military lifestyle and expeditionary nature of the Marine Corps challenge the strengths and character of our families. We believe that as Marines make the commitment to our Corps and Country, we owe them and their families an appropriate quality of life. We know that the Congress equally believes this and we appreciate your steadfast support to the family today and into the future.

Transitioning Marine and Family Support Programs

In 2006, the Commandant of the Marine Corps challenged Marine Corps leadership to consider the needs of families in view of wartime requirements and future sustainment. He asked two additional questions —“Do we really know the needs of our

Marines and their families?” and “Are we providing our commanders good guidance and open communication lines to receive their execution feedback?” Family Support Program sponsors conducted extensive program and customer research, including the previously noted Quality of Life in the Marine Corps Study, functionality assessments on four major family support programs, and a recent effort to look at the communication needs of our Marines and families.

In the four areas of Unit Personal and Family Readiness, Marine Corps Family Team Building, Exceptional Family Member, and School Liaison Programs, we have fundamentally changed the way we provide family support and our supported/supporting relationships. Eliminating variation, giving good guidance to commanders and refreshing program support to meet the current and future needs of families has been our underlying basis of improvement. The Commandant approved the resulting extensive transition plans and required funding for immediate execution. A brief summary of our progress to date follows:

Unit Personal and Family Readiness Program (UPFRP)

Unit commanders are accountable for their unit’s readiness and helping their Marines and families achieve a high state of personal and family readiness. In discharging these duties, the commander typically called upon volunteers who utilized spouse-to-spouse connections and processes to contact and inform family members. Wartime operations and ensuing deployments overburdened our volunteer network due to increasing family contact and increased information requirements. This phenomenon occurred in the Reserve Component as well as the Active Component. While Marine Corps Community Services (MCCS), the primary community services support arm of the

Marine Corps, was capable of flexing to support deployments, sustained deployments stressed our service delivery model. Making positive contact with Marines and families regarding their MCCS benefits and programs proved even more challenging. We have taken specific action to enhance the unit commander's capability by increasing staffing, establishing Family Readiness Officers (FROs) throughout the Marine Corps who serve as part of the unit commanders' Unit and Personal Family Readiness Command Team, and procuring a technology suite. Today, there are 64 FROs and 150 Deputy FROs serving in the Reserve Component alone. The FRO, as a special staff officer and a trusted agent of the commander, makes direct contact with unit Marines and families to convey official command communication, arrange required deployment or readiness training, and conduct information and referral services. The FRO is also trained and aware of the multitude of programs and capabilities which provide needed support programs for Marines and their families.

Our volunteers are still in strong support of our unit programs, but we have been able to significantly reduce the burden of their extended volunteer service hours. We have staffed MCCS Area Coordinators at major camps to help the commander plan and conduct unit support or socialization events and have increased their discretionary nonappropriated unit fund allocations.

Understanding that communication is a key quality of life issue important to our Marines and their families, we conducted research and analysis to assess the effectiveness of current communication methods, identify communication needs of Marines and their families, and develop a formal organizational communication system to facilitate three-way communication: commands to Marines and families; Marines and families to

commands; and Marines and families to each other. Three tools of that communication system have been developed and implemented: 1) the Mass Communication Tool enables simultaneous broadcast of official communication via email, text messaging, or phone, and other technology enhancements to expand communications between the unit and Marines and their families regarding official communication or important unit training events; 2) the Volunteer Tracking Tool is a web-based tool that allows Marines and families to track their volunteer hours and search for volunteer opportunities anywhere in the world; 3) the Family Readiness Assessment Tool enables a commander to take a pulse on the health of his or her personal and family readiness program. All three of these tools are available to the Reserve Component as well as the Active Component.

Marine Corps Family Team Building

The Unit Personal and Family Readiness Program is supported by the MCCC Marine Corps Family Team Building Program (MCFTB), which provides high-quality training to support the life cycle of the Marine and family through mission, career and life events. The UPFRP and MCFTB programs are enmeshed and that strong supported/supporting relationship is critical to ensuring personal and family readiness. We have expanded and enhanced our pre, during, and post-deployment training to address the increased demands and potential impact of multiple, sustained deployments on Marines and their families, including the Reserve Component. All of these programs are designed to assist families with the challenges they might face throughout the deployment process. The assistance includes programs such as Readiness and Deployment Support; Lifestyle, Insights, Networking, Knowledge and Skills (L.I.N.K.S.) and LifeSkills training.

Acknowledging the role extended family members play in fostering personal and family readiness, our family readiness support reaches out to parents and extended family members of Marines. Our MCFTB staff provides all Unit Command Teams training on the roles, responsibilities and supporting tools that are available to foster personal and family readiness.

Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP)

Today, we are actively helping over 6,500 families with 8,100 family members gain access to medical, educational, and financial services that may be limited or restricted at certain duty stations. Marines and their families enrolled in the EFMP are now receiving robust case management services aimed at providing a continuum of care that facilitates a seamless transition from installation to installation. Our policy is to have an informed assignment developed among the sponsor, assignment monitors and local EFMP coordinators. In cases where acceptable care cannot be achieved at the proposed duty station, a continuation on current station will be offered the family. We are providing 40 hours of Marine Corps-funded respite care per month to all enrolled families. The EFMP Respite Care program is intended to reduce stress on Marine families who are caring for one or more family members with special needs, as well as handling the deployment cycle of one of the parents. This program may be used in conjunction with the TRICARE Extended Care Health Option (ECHO) respite care benefit. We recognize the challenges facing families who have members diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder. We will continue to search for solutions, to include participating in a case study with the National Council on Disabilities.

School Liaison Program

The education of over 52,000 school-aged children of Marine Corps parents directly contributes to the overall state of family readiness within our Corps. We recognize that our children, who are often as mobile as their military parents, face additional challenges associated with frequent moves between schools and educational systems of differing quality and standards. Some of these restrictive practices involve the transfer of records; course sequencing; graduation requirements; exclusion from extra-curricular activities; redundant or missed entrance and/or exit testing; kindergarten and first grade entrance age variations; and the power of custodial parents while parents are deployed. To address these challenges, we established School Liaison positions at each of our installations to help parents and commanders interact with local schools and districts. Installation School Liaisons work at local and district levels, while Regional School Liaisons work state issues. The national level School Liaison appropriately addresses Federal level issues and coordinates State agendas as necessary. Specifically, the School Liaisons advocate for school-aged children and form partnerships with schools and other agencies to improve access and availability to quality education as well as to mitigate education transition issues. School Liaisons are actively involved in efforts to assist school districts in applying for available competitive and noncompetitive grants focusing on issues arising with military school-aged children.

Complimenting these efforts, the Marine Corps strongly supports the work of the Office of the Secretary Defense (OSD) with respect to increasing the number of states signing on to the "Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children," which would enable reciprocal acceptance of enrollment, eligibility, placement and

graduation requirements. To date, 24 states have passed the Compact. We are very appreciative of the actions taken by those states to approve the compact and we are hopeful that the remaining states in session will take similar action to approve it and join this year.

With every step we take in our family support transition plan, we have been careful to let our families know that “we hear you” and are taking action to improve our support capabilities. Their requests are reasonable and the Marine Corps is committed to response. Although much progress has been made through our listening, learning, and responding actions, we still have much more to do. In the meantime, our families continue to provide feedback and express their satisfaction and appreciation for the newly refreshed or expanded programs.

Deployment Support for Marines and Families

The Marine Corps recognizes that achieving self-sufficiency and resiliency in family readiness is no easy task in the face of repeated operational deployments. Our deployment support program is focused on keeping the Marine ready, and is designed for both the Marine and family by providing information during preparation, support during deployment, and assistance with re-integration upon return. We have included family members in our expanded and enhanced pre, during, and post-deployment briefings to address the increased demands and potential impact of multiple, sustained deployments.

As previously indicated, communications is a critical quality of life concern for families, especially when the Marine is deployed. The Marine Corps has successfully field-tested two Portable Morale Satellite Communications Systems that provide an internet and web-cam capability to forward operating bases (FOBs) in Afghanistan where

traditional “Internet Cafés” are unavailable. This not only provides Marines with an opportunity to connect to families, but also provides a recreation outlet at these austere and remote locations. While these systems are expeditionary and can easily be moved between FOBs, our intent is to expand this program to provide capability to at least 12 locations simultaneously. The Office of the Secretary Defense is studying the wider applicability of this system.

In Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), the Marine Corps partners with the Army and Air Force Exchange Service (AAFES) to provide Tactical Field Exchange (TFE) services. Marines in Iraq and Afghanistan have access to a variety of items from “home,” such as health and comfort items, movies, CDs, and snack foods. The Marine Corps has an average of 25 Marine Corps Exchange (MCX) civilian volunteers serving the TFEs in Iraq, many of whom have volunteered to go back for a second time, alongside uniformed MCCS Marines, some of whom are on their fourth tour.

In Afghanistan, we have been operating out of a TFE and using mobile Warrior Express Service (WES) Teams to provide MCX service to our Marines in outlying camps. Through our partnership with AAFES, we recently opened a 3,000 square foot facility that provides exchange service to our growing population in Afghanistan, and that will be expanded significantly in the future. We are preparing for increased quality of life support requirements as troop strengths increase.

Behavioral Health

Across the board, we are very concerned with suicides, domestic violence, substance abuse, and sexual assault instances. Marine Corps commanders are fully engaged in promoting the behavioral health of our Marines, Sailors, and family members.

The message to our Marines is to look out for each other and to know that it is okay to seek help.

The Marine Corps Combat and Operational Stress Control Program encompasses a set of policies, training, and tools to enable leaders, individuals, and families to prepare for and manage the stress of operational deployment cycles. Our emphasis is on the well-being and readiness of the force and in building resilient and cohesive units. Our training emphasizes ways in which to recognize stress reactions early and manage them more effectively to return Marines to resilience. Our assessments of stress responses and outcomes are rated on a continuum: unaffected; temporarily or mildly affected; more severely impaired but likely to recover; or persistently distressed and in need of professional assistance. Our leaders receive extensive training in establishing an environment where Marines who need help, seek it.

To assist leaders with prevention, rapid identification, and early treatment of combat operational stress, we are expanding our program of embedding mental health professionals in operational units – the Operational Stress Control and Readiness (OSCAR) program – to provide direct support to all active and reserve ground combat elements. This will be achieved over the next three years through realignment of existing Navy structure supporting the operating forces, and increases in Navy mental health provider inventory. Our ultimate intent is to expand OSCAR to all elements of the Marine Air-Ground Task Force. In the interim, OSCAR teams are filled to the extent possible on an ad hoc basis with assets from Navy Medicine.

The Marine Corps is now expanding the OSCAR construct and extending the capability down to the infantry battalion and company. We are doing this by providing

OSCAR training to the existing doctors, chaplains and Corpsmen in the battalion as well as designated officers and NCOs to provide peer mentors to our Marines – this will make help more immediately available and familiar, reducing any stigma of asking for help.

Suicide Prevention

With 42 Marine suicides in 2008, we experienced our highest suicide rate since the start of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom. Through early July, we have 30 presumed or confirmed suicides this year. The loss of any Marine through suicide is a tragedy for the Marine's family and unit, and can never be accepted. Our numbers are disturbing; we will not accept them, or stand by idly while our Marines and families suffer.

Our studies have found that regardless of duty station, deployment, or duty status, the primary stressors associated with Marine suicides are problems in romantic relationships, physical health, work-related issues such as poor performance and job dissatisfaction, and pending legal or administrative action. This is consistent with other Services and civilian findings. Multiple stressors are usually present in suicide. We are actively engaged in prevention and early identification of problems that may increase the risk of suicide. Understanding that there is no single suicide prevention solution, we are committed to having an effect on the individual Marine through leadership and command involvement at all levels. Earlier this year, the Commandant required all of our commanders to conduct suicide prevention training for 100 percent of the Marines under their charge. This training educated Marines on the current situation in our Corps; it taught them how to identify the warning signs; it reinforced the responsibility of leaders; and it informed all of the resources available locally for support.

Today we are in the process of rolling out a new, high-impact training package for our NCOs and FMF Petty Officers. It will be taught by NCOs to NCOs to equip them to be that first line of defense. It contains interviews with Marines who attempted suicide, family members of Marines who died by suicide, unit leaders and unit members. This material sends a powerful message. At the end, we expect our NCOs will better understand the problem, and will embrace their key role in keeping Marines safe and ready.

The Marine Corps will continue to pursue initiatives to prevent suicides, to include reevaluating existing programs designed to reduce the stressors most correlated with suicidal behavior; developing and distributing new prevention programs; and refreshing and expanding training materials.

Sexual Assault Prevention and Response

Sexual assault is a crime, and we take every reported incident very seriously, while also recognizing that many incidents may not be reported. The impact on victims and the corrosive effect on unit and individual readiness are matters of great concern. Although the Marine Corps is in compliance with OSD Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) policy, we have identified the need to do more “to the left” of the incident, especially considering our at-risk population. While there is also the opportunity to address what we are doing after an incident occurs, we believe that incorporating aspects of behavioral health in our values-based training and more specifically involving senior leaders, will bring increased awareness to sexual assault and also focus our prevention efforts. We are also staffing full time SAPR managers at installations.

Our Marine Corps Inspector General's office is currently leading a task force to examine the training and implementation of our program at the installation level, through surveys and focus group discussions. All Marines receive sexual assault prevention and awareness training upon entry and are required to receive refresher training at least annually. We have also incorporated sexual assault prevention into officer and noncommissioned officer professional development courses and key senior leader conferences and working groups. At the request of our field commanders, we have also increased the number of Marine Corps judge advocates who attend specialized training on prosecution of these crimes and have assembled a mobile training team to teach our prosecutors how to better manage these cases.

In August, a senior leader of the Marine Corps will lead a study of best practices of Sister Services and academia in raising awareness of sexual assault, prevention, and bystander intervention. The Operational Planning Team effort will develop a way ahead for making our SAPR training more effective in reaching our Marines.

Wounded Warrior Regiment Support to Families

Just over two years ago, the Marine Corps established the Wounded Warrior Regiment, which instituted a comprehensive and integrated approach to caring for our wounded, ill and injured Marines and Sailors. An important part of this care is providing vital support for their families, who equally endure the challenges of the recovery process. The Regiment continues to implement family care programs that provide support through all phases of recovery regardless of geographic location. The effectiveness of these programs finds its foundation in accessible resources and proactive outreach.

The Regimental family readiness programs ensure critical support through multiple resources accessible to families. The Regiment's family support staff includes Family Readiness Officers, Family Support Coordinators, Chaplains, Patient Affairs Teams, Veterans Affairs Liaisons, District Injured Support Cells, and Recovery Care Coordinators. All work toward developing relationships with Marines and their families to provide the best possible care and support. In addition to the daily support offered by the staff, families can contact the Sergeant Merlin German Wounded Warrior Call Center. The Call Center is staffed around the clock, by operators trained to assist families with benefit information, resources and referrals, and community reintegration needs.

The Regiment relies on proactive outreach to families to ensure they are receiving the care and support they need. Town hall meetings, a quarterly newsletter, outreach calls initiated by the Call Center, and questionnaires and polling are some of the means to regularly assess the quality of services and to identify areas for improvement.

Our combined approach of accessible resources and proactive outreach casts a wide net of vital and immediate support available to families during all phases of the recovery process regardless of geographical location. This critical support to both Wounded Warriors and their families creates the most promising environment for recovery. The Regiment will continue to provide ongoing advocacy for all wounded, ill, or injured Marines and their families, embodying the Marine Corps tradition to always take care of our own.

Identifying and Resolving Program Gaps

A recent study provided some interesting insights into the communication needs and styles of our Marines and their families, particularly our millennial families. For

example, we learned that a Marine Corps installation is the loneliest place on earth for a young spouse – particularly one who is pregnant. Also, many junior Marines arrive in the Corps missing basic life skills that prior generations might assume or take for granted, such as managing finances and living independently from parents. While the Marine Corps has dozens of resources available for families, they are generally used after problems escalate and not at the critical time of transition from civilian to military life. We have also learned that our millennial generation of Marines prefer to use social networking systems and peer to peer connections for their information sources. While we believe that our Family Readiness Officers will pay great dividends in connecting families to assistance, the challenge of effective and pointed communication is a gap that must be resolved through an organizational communication system that ensures information passed is of the “news you can use” variety.

Beyond the significant challenge of improving our communication effectiveness, we have identified other gaps which require further research and problem resolution. We believe that critical coordination with Sister Services and OSD will help us in this regard.

Installation vs. Community-Based Programming. Military installations have served as the hub of our service delivery model for decades. Our Marine Corps Reserve families are not well supported by installation-based programming and would be better served by community-based programming that utilizes and maximizes other Federal and state service platforms. Additionally, while we have significantly assessed our wartime footing requirements on installations, we have not considered fully the changes necessary to support the wartime “citizen soldier”. We have recently engaged in discussion with OSD and Sister Services on this topic.

Remote and Isolated Command Support and other Hot Spots. As we have conducted initial assessments or required needs at remote and isolated commands, we have learned that many Marine Corps installations are located in remote areas or around local counties or cities whose community services infrastructure is not capable of supporting Marines and their families. In these instances, it is necessary for the Marine Corps to increase capabilities aboard the base.

Long-Term Care of Survivors and Caring for the Caregivers of Injured/Ill. The families of our survivors and those of injured/ill often have individualized care requirements that present unique challenges. These family members – particularly surviving spouses – are not typically located around Marine Corps installation support systems and a community-based programming approach is required. We have established a Long-Term Care capability within our casualty section at headquarters Marine Corps, and initiated action to explore partnerships with Sister Services, state and local agencies and non-profit organizations.

Access and Availability to Health Care. Over the past year, we have initiated town hall meetings through our Deputy Commandant for Manpower and Reserve Affairs, for the purpose of gathering customer feedback on health care concerns of our Marines and families. Following these meetings, we act to address and resolve local and systemic issues. The Navy Surgeon General and Tricare Management Activity (TMA) also participate in these meetings. From a system-wide perspective, once in the system, Marines and their families are traditionally satisfied, but there are some specific challenges with gaining access to care, availability of specialty care, and reimbursement

for mileage to long distance medical appointments. We are working directly with Navy Medicine and TMA to resolve these concerns.

Behavioral Health. While we maintain our cautious concern over the up ticks in suicides and incidents of domestic violence, substance abuse, and sexual assault, we must also directly assess the quality and effectiveness of our prevention and intervention programs. Since January, we have had teams of program analysts assessing our installation program operations. From these assessments, we believe that improved prevention efforts and corrective policies and procedures are warranted.

Availability of Child Care. We are providing 11,757 child care spaces and meeting 63.6% of the calculated total potential need. To meet the DoD standard of 80% of potential need, we would require slightly over 3,000 additional spaces. It is important to note that the potential need data is not static and fluctuates. To address child care requirements, Congress has funded 915 spaces in FY 08/09. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) and 2009 Overseas Contingency Operation (OCO) projects provide 1,700 spaces. Based on forecasted data in 2010, we project an increase in our total potential need of approximately 500 additional spaces. The Marine Corps continues to assess requirements for infants and children through 12 years of age using multiple strategies and partnerships.

Family Member Employment Education and Training Assistance. An important quality of life concern for our Marines and their families is the ability of the spouse to establish and maintain a career regardless of the sponsor's duty station. As previously stated, the Marine makes the commitment to serve, but the family also serves. Independent needs,

goals and desires for the family or sponsor are often sacrificed or constrained due to frequent relocations and responsibilities of single parenting upon deployment or during high Optempo periods. While initiatives have been instituted to provide portable careers and education funding, we have more to do in documenting need and developing comprehensive and integrated strategies to support employment, training, and educational requirements of spouses.

Transition Assistance. The final family support program contact that we have with Marines and their families is through our Transition Assistance Management Program. It is critical that we ensure that this contact produces the kind of support that enables the return of responsible citizens to the civilian population who are accepted and productive in their new direction and life change. We are currently exploring opportunities to maximize our support by providing ways to more directly connect Marines and their families to education, training, or jobs as they exit the Marine Corps.

Impact of the Economy. As with all Americans, the Marines and their families are not exempt from financial challenges. As noted previously, many of our junior Marines lack basic financial management skills. We have conducted a functionality assessment on our Personal Financial Management Program and believe that opportunity exists to enhance our support. In addition, we have programs and services, such as our Marine Corps Exchange and Marine Marts, whose mission is to provide high value goods and merchandise. In our Exchange and Marine Marts, we have implemented value programs and pricing strategies specifically targeted to our at-risk populations.

Resourcing our Programs and Requirements

We are grateful to Congress for providing supplemental funding during Fiscal Years 2008 and 2009 that enabled the initial start-up of our improved family readiness program. The Marine Corps' FY10 Quality of Life Activities (OP-34) baseline direct support O&M budget request is \$378 million and sustains many of the family support requirements previously funded with supplemental appropriations. When including the important \$26 million of OSD-provided funding expected for the Family Advocacy, Transition and Relocation Assistance, and Drug Demand Reduction Programs, the Marine Corps' MCCA baseline O&M budget increases by \$119 million from originally budgeted FY09 to FY10. This enduring commitment across the spectrum of programs operationalizes the Commandant of the Marine Corps' Guidance to "Improve the quality of life for our Marines and our families."

Conclusion

Going forward, the Marine Corps is committed to continuing improvements to our family readiness programs and equipping our Marines and their families with the knowledge and skills to meet and surmount the challenges of a wartime military lifestyle. At the same time that our family support programs contribute to the Marine Corps goals for recruitment, retention and readiness, they must address the varying needs of our "generations" of Marines and families. On-going assessments, surveys and evaluations of program effectiveness will serve to further identify service gaps and additional program requirements for consideration. We recognize that more work needs to be done to deliver programs and services which meet reasonable quality of life expectations of our Marines and their families. On behalf of the Marine Corps and Marine Corps families, I thank

you for your continued advocacy and attention to the well-being of our Marines and their families. It is most sincerely appreciated.

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NOT FOR PUBLICATION
UNTIL RELEASED BY THE
SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

STATEMENT OF
MASTER CHIEF PETTY OFFICER OF THE NAVY
(SUBMARINE WARFARE/SURFACE WARFARE)
RICK WEST
BEFORE THE
HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY PERSONNEL
22 JULY 2009

NOT FOR PUBLICATION
UNTIL RELEASED BY THE
SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

Madam Chairwoman and members of the Committee, it is an honor to be with you today and represent nearly 445,000 active duty and reserve Sailors and the incredible Americans who support them as Navy family members.

Introduction:

Thirty one years ago, Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Thomas Hayward took a hard look at retention, saw it decreasing and started asking for feedback from the fleet. What he discovered was that Sailors were leaving not because of dissatisfaction with the service, but due to family issues.

Admiral Hayward made family support an immediate priority. Not coincidentally, the first Fleet and Family Support Center (formerly called Navy Family Service Center) opened in Norfolk in 1979. Over the course of the next three decades, the amount of Fleet and Family Support Centers supporting our Navy families grew exponentially, with an unprecedented expansion of services to meet the demands of a mobilized war fighting force in Iraq, Afghanistan, and throughout the CENTCOM area of operations.

Navy senior leadership has long understood that family readiness is tied to operational readiness. More than that, we have learned that as our commitments as a service are expanded, the possibility for stress on the family increases dramatically.

As we continue to address the needs of Sailors and their families, our guiding principles continue to target our resources to the most critical requirements, focusing on our fleet and family readiness, resilience, and quality of life. We stand committed to providing the Navy Family Readiness Program with the resources to not only sustain but enhance the core programs that have been in place for 30 years.

Since 2005, Navy Family Readiness program management, implementation, execution and programming have been aligned under Commander, Navy Installations Command. This alignment has resulted in increased effectiveness, flexibility and responsiveness in program management and service delivery from the headquarters to the installation level and has ensured that program development and resourcing decisions are not divorced from the practical realities of delivering ground-level support and responding to the challenges faced by Navy families.

Today, Navy families continue to benefit from a growing number of programs and services focusing on child and youth programs, deployment support, crisis response, career support and counseling for individuals, families and commands.

The Navy Family Readiness Program is in a continuous process of improvement and is, by design, consistently changing to remain relevant. As the dynamics of American society shift, and as Navy families continue to be representative of our nation's communities, it is absolutely critical that our support programs evolve along with the needs of our loved ones. Equally important, as the environment in which our Sailors and their families live changes along with global requirements and world events, we must be mindful of the best ways to support the Navy family. Today, that environment includes more frequent and often longer deployments and deployments that are individual versus unit deployments.

As we speak, fourteen thousand United States Sailors are serving on the ground, alongside Soldiers and Marines in the Fifth Fleet area of responsibility. That's compared to the ten thousand Sailors serving onboard our ships in the same theater. Those numbers, more than anything else, point to a shift in traditional Navy missions and an increase in responsibility for our service.

What we must be cognizant of, is that those numbers also indicate a trigger for more stress on the family and more stress on a force that just recently completed a gradual decrease in personnel.

Overview:

The Navy Fleet and Family Support Program is organized into three sub-functional areas: Deployment Readiness, Career Support and Retention, and Crisis Response. Across all three sub-functions, services include information and referral, individual clinical and non-clinical consultation and educational classes and workshops.

Deployment Readiness has always been and remains the area of highest priority for Navy family support. It includes services provided in the areas of deployment support, ombudsmen coordination, relocation assistance, and life skills education. Deployment support focuses on practical preparation, emotional aspects of separation, supporting children during deployment, maintaining communication and closeness during deployment, and homecoming and successful re-integration of the Sailor back into their family and community.

Command Ombudsmen are trained volunteers who serve as a vital two-way communication link between command leadership and family members. Ombudsmen provide personalized support and guidance to families in adapting to the challenges of a mobile military lifestyle and extended operations necessary to meet the Navy's maritime strategy. We have recently revised the Ombudsman instruction, revitalizing several key positions and introducing a strengthened chain of support for training and education.

Career Support and Retention includes services provided in the areas of Personal Financial Management, Transition Assistance, and Family Employment Readiness.

Our Sailors are not immune to the challenges of our current economy. A significant leadership priority over the last twelve to eighteen months has been the education of our force and their families in terms of money management and personal finances.

The Navy's Personal Financial Management program provides a collaborative and comprehensive approach to education and counseling that emphasizes a proactive, career lifecycle approach to behavior modification.

Crisis Response includes programs and services provided in the areas of clinical counseling, family violence prevention, case management and victim advocacy, new parent support and sexual assault prevention and response.

Since 1979, Fleet and Family Support Centers have offered clinical counseling services unique to the Department of the Navy. Counseling services provided are brief and solution-focused in response to commonly occurring life experiences such as marital discord, parent-child conflict, or occupational/school issues. The intent of these services is early identification and prevention of more significant conditions or problems, thereby promoting improved quality of life and increased resilience in individuals and families.

Child Development and Youth Programs:

When I testified before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Military Construction, Quality of Life and Veteran's Affairs on February 4th I said that one of my top priorities in terms of family support was the continued emphasis on Child Development and Youth Programs. Overwhelming feedback from our families points to affordable, high-quality childcare—preferably onboard our installations—as a significant quality of life factor.

The services we provide are outstanding. We offer child care, youth development, and school transition services for 120,780 children from four weeks to 18 years of age. Our programs continue to be ranked amongst the highest in the nation for quality and oversight. Staffing and quality of our facilities are not a concern. Space limitations, however, continue to be challenging.

The Department of Defense goal is to achieve child care capacity for 80% of potential need which is sufficient capacity to place children from waiting lists within three months after care is requested. Our current capacity meets 72 percent of the potential need with a six-month placement time, except in fleet concentration areas where placement time can be longer.

Adequacy and Effectiveness of Navy Family Programs:

The Navy has developed a standard level of service for each family support program. This ensures consistent program offerings and available services across the Navy that is independent of a Commanding Officer's discretion.

Navy Family Readiness programs and services are systematically evaluated through several mechanisms, giving us both qualitative and quantitative data we can use to answer questions regarding the adequacy and effectiveness of family programs.

To meet the Department of Defense requirement for triennial inspection of all military family centers, Navy Fleet and Family Support Programs implemented an Accreditation Program. Accreditation provides detailed analysis of program operation, to include identification of strengths and areas for improvement. In addition to Navy accreditation processes, Fleet and Family Support Centers survey customers at least twice a year to ensure effective customer service and validate that services are useful for participants.

In my travels around the fleet I routinely meet with command leadership, Sailors and family members to solicit feedback on how our programs are working and where improvements can be made. Other informal needs assessment information is also obtained on a recurring basis by Fleet Family Service Center managers.

Navy Child and Youth Programs also conduct a program of unannounced annual inspection by qualified Navy child development specialists and accreditation by the National Association for the Education of Young Children for Child Development Centers and the National Afterschool Alliance for school-aged care.

Outreach to Navy Families:

Sailors, family members, and command participants are surveyed on a recurring basis by installation Fleet and Family Support Program personnel to determine the adequacy and effectiveness of family programs. Programs are adapted accordingly in response to feedback about what does and does not work. At the enterprise level, we have learned that aggressive outreach, targeted marketing, and providing services at times and locations that are flexible and convenient increase family member utilization.

In the past, our Sailors and their families came to us for services. Today, the staffs at our Fleet and Family Support Centers are taking every opportunity to bring their programs to the customer, whether it is their workplace, their homes, or their community. An example of our aggressive outreach to Navy families is our efforts in social media. The Fleet and Family Support Program is targeting its primary customers, 18-24 year olds, with social media. More than three quarters of them have a profile on a social network site, according to a December 2008 survey from the Pew Internet & American Life Project.

Sailors and their families need to know that there are many programs and services that can help them navigate the uniqueness of Navy life. Even though we have Fleet and Family Support Centers located at bases around the world, we understand that not everyone has easy access to them. Social media is one way of extending our reach to Navy families who need answers to their questions.

Social media also helps facilitate the building of a strong community network of services. It is assisting commanders in planning for and responding to family support needs. The Navy has grown over the past 30 years, and the Navy Family Readiness Program has grown with it. The program is committed to remaining relevant to the mission.

Summary and Conclusion:

Given the unbreakable link between family readiness and operational readiness, the Navy Family Readiness Program will continue its commitment to provide effective family programs. The success of the program, in the face of financial challenges to the services, will largely depend on its ability to develop efficient and targeted outreach programs.

In working toward that goal, we are increasing our response capability to reach geographically dispersed family members of our active and reserve components. We will continue our efforts, within our budgetary constraints, to provide resources and services to Individual Augmentee and Global War on Terror Support Assignment families, families of wounded, ill or injured, and our ombudsmen network that supports them. We will continue to explore creative solutions to overcome impediments to full utilization of technology solutions that equip us to maintain unfettered communications with families. Our primary focus remains on delivering the best services at the right time and in the right place.

Five factors contribute to the success of our family support programs: leadership, education, communication, execution and reaction to feedback. I rely heavily on our senior enlisted leaders to ensure every Sailor and every family member knows what support is available to them. But after they have received it we need to hear from them and then we need to improve quickly where necessary.

It is my hope that continued cooperation and support at this level will enhance our family support programs and services. It has long been my opinion that the strength of the Navy lies not strictly with our ships or weapons systems but rather with the men and women who wear the cloth of our Nation and the loved ones who support them from home. .

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DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE

PRESENTATION TO THE COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY PERSONNEL

ON THE OVERSIGHT OF FAMILY SUPPORT PROGRAMS

UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SUBJECT: FAMILY SUPPORT PROGRAMS

**STATEMENT OF: CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT OF THE AIR FORCE
JAMES A. ROY**

22 July 2009

**NOT FOR PUBLICATION UNTIL RELEASED
BY THE HOUSE ARMED SERVICES SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY
PERSONNEL ON THE OVERSIGHT OF FAMILY SUPPORT PROGRAMS
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**



BIOGRAPHY

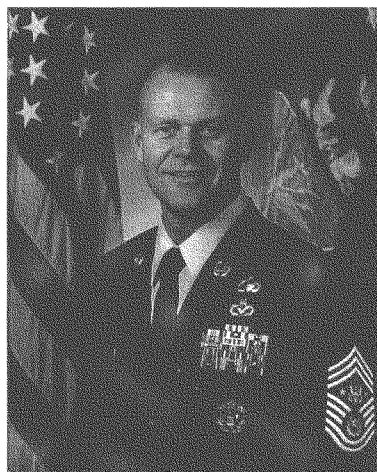
UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT OF THE AIR FORCE JAMES A. ROY

Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force James A. Roy represents the highest enlisted level of leadership, and as such, provides direction for the enlisted force and represents their interests, as appropriate, to the American public, and to those in all levels of government. He serves as the personal adviser to the Chief of Staff and the Secretary of the Air Force on all issues regarding the welfare, readiness, morale, and proper utilization and progress of the enlisted force. Chief Roy is the 16th chief master sergeant appointed to the highest noncommissioned officer position.

Chief Roy grew up in Monroe, Mich. and entered the Air Force in September 1982. His background includes numerous leadership roles at squadron, group, numbered air force and combatant command levels. He has been stationed at locations in Florida, the Republic of Korea, Missouri, Guam, Mississippi, South Carolina, Virginia, Kuwait, Japan and Hawaii. He has worked a variety of civil engineer duties. Chief Roy also served as a superintendent of a military personnel flight and a mission support group before becoming a command chief master sergeant at the wing, air expeditionary wing, numbered air force and combatant command levels.

Before assuming his current position, he served as Senior Enlisted Leader and advisor to the United States Pacific Command Combatant Commander and staff, Camp H. M. Smith, Hawaii. He was appointed to this position on June 30, 2009.



EDUCATION

1985 Noncommissioned Officer Preparatory Course, MacDill AFB, Fla.
 1991 Associate of Science Degree in Construction Management, Park College, Parkville, Mo.
 1992 Associate in Applied Science Degree in Construction Technology, Community College of the Air Force
 1993 Noncommissioned Officer Academy, Kadena AB, Japan
 1993 Associate in Applied Science Degree in Instructor of Technology and Military Science, Community College of the Air Force
 1996 Senior Noncommissioned Officer Academy, Gunter AFB, Ala.
 1996 Baccalaureate of Science Degree in Engineering Management, Park College with Summa Cum Laude honors, Parkville, Mo.
 2000 Master of Science Degree in Human Resources Management, Troy State College, Troy, Ala.
 2005 USAF Senior Leadership Course, Center for Creative Leadership, Greensboro, N.C.
 2005 Keystone, U.S. Joint Forces Command, Suffolk, Va.
 2005 Leadership Team Awareness Course, Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute, Patrick AFB, Fla.
 2006 USAF Senior Leadership Course, Gettysburg College, Gettysburg, Pa.

2008 Security Assistance Management-Overseas Course, Defense Institute of Security Assistance Management, Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio

ASSIGNMENTS

1. September 1982 – November 1982, trainee, Basic Military Training, Lackland AFB, Texas
2. November 1982 – February 1983, student, heavy equipment operator, Fort Leonard Wood, Mo.
3. February 1983 – January 1987, heavy equipment operator, 56th Civil Engineer Squadron, MacDill AFB, Fla.
4. February 1987 – December 1987, heavy equipment operator, 554th Civil Engineer Squadron, Osan AB, Republic of Korea
5. January 1988 – May 1992, instructor/instructor supervisor, heavy equipment operator, 3770th Technical Training Group, Detachment 0001, Fort Leonard Wood, Mo.
6. May 1992 – May 1993, foreman, horizontal construction, 8th Civil Engineer Squadron, Kunsan AB, Republic of Korea
7. May 1993 – March 1994, foreman, heavy repair, 633d Civil Engineer Squadron, Andersen AFB, Guam
8. April 1994 – March 1995, manager, heavy repair, 36th Civil Engineer Squadron, Andersen AFB, Guam
9. March 1995 – November 1996, chief, readiness flight, 36th Civil Engineer Squadron, Andersen AFB, Guam
10. November 1996 – July 1997, chief, heavy repair, 36th Civil Engineer Squadron, Andersen AFB, Guam
11. August 1997 – July 1999, chief, facility maintenance, 81st Civil Engineer Squadron, Keesler AFB, Miss.
12. July 1999 – March 2000, superintendent, military personnel flight, 81st Mission Support Squadron, Keesler AFB, Miss.
13. March 2000 – September 2000, superintendent, 81st Mission Support Group, Keesler AFB, Miss.
14. September 2000 – September 2002, command chief master sergeant, 14th Flying Training Wing, Columbus AFB, Miss.
15. September 2002 – May 2004, command chief master sergeant, 437th Airlift Wing, Charleston AFB, S.C.
16. June 2004 – August 2005, command chief master sergeant, 1st Fighter Wing, Langley AFB, Va. (October 2004 – November 2004, command chief master sergeant, 386th Air Expeditionary Wing, Southwest Asia)
17. August 2005 – May 2007, command chief master sergeant, United States Forces Japan and Fifth Air Force, Yokota AB, Japan
18. June 2007 – June 2009, senior enlisted leader and advisor, United States Pacific Command, Camp H.M. Smith, Hawaii
19. June 2009 – present, Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force, the Pentagon, Washington, D.C.

MAJOR AWARDS AND DECORATIONS

Defense Superior Service Medal
 Defense Meritorious Service Medal
 Air Force Meritorious Service Medal with one silver oak leaf cluster
 Air Force Commendation Medal with two bronze oak leaf clusters
 Air Force Achievement Medal with one silver oak leaf cluster

OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

1993 John Levitow Award, Noncommissioned Officer Academy
 1996 13th Air Force Senior Noncommissioned Officer the Year
 1996 Ancient Order of Chamorro and a special resolution from Guam's 24th Legislature

EFFECTIVE DATES OF PROMOTION

Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force June 30, 2009

(Current as of July 2009)

INTRODUCTION

Thank you for this opportunity to present concerns important to our Airmen and their families before this committee. It is truly an honor and a privilege to appear here alongside my Service Senior Enlisted Advisor teammates as we pursue the best possible quality of service and quality of life for our Servicemembers and their families.

Thank you also for the outstanding support to our Airmen and their families from the Members here and from the entire House of Representatives. Your actions and efforts on our behalf are vital to our success as a Service.

Your Air Force is more than 660,000 strong. Behind every one of our Total Force Team, which includes our civilians and officer and enlisted Airmen – Active Duty, Reserve and Air National Guard – is a family. From our spouses and children who keep our home lives functioning and steady amidst our increased wartime operations tempo, to our mothers and fathers who journey to foreign lands to sit beside the hospital bed of their wounded warrior and bring them home, these families deserve our utmost support and our unswerving efforts to care for them.

We are focused on expanding child care capacity, caring for our special needs families, improving financial readiness, and providing educational and development opportunities for military spouses and children. We also know we can do more. Every day our Airmen and their families discover new ideas, new and better ways to live their lives. We are realizing efficiencies through process improvement programs like Air Force Smart Operations for the 21st Century and through grass roots efforts by our spouses in the Key Spouses Program, Officer and Enlisted Spouses Clubs and other informal groups and meetings.

Our families are incredibly supportive of our Airmen. These families make many personal and professional sacrifices. They pick up the entire family workload and household responsibilities when our Airmen deploy or leave on temporary duty, and they pick up and move

across the country or across the globe wherever our Airmen are called to serve. The needs and care of our families touch every aspect of an Air Force member's career from accession to separation, and we owe it to these families to ensure they are safe, healthy, and have good educational and development opportunities.

America's Air Force is the best in the world. That's not just because of our equipment -- but also because of our people. Airmen are critical to mission success. As such, developing and caring for Airmen and their families is one of the Air Force's top priorities, and our efforts are focused towards this priority.

Throughout my Air Force career, I've seen how our Airmen demonstrate their commitment to service -- every day, around the world. Airmen make a decision to remain on duty based on many factors, one of which is the quality of support they and their families receive. This underscores the fact that caring for families has a direct impact on mission readiness. When we take care of Air Force families, Airmen are freer from distractions and better able to focus on the mission.

CARING FOR FAMILIES

Air Force families lead challenging lives that include higher operations tempo, multiple deployments, increased mobilization, longer periods of time away from home, and frequent relocations, in addition to normal life stressors. Readily available, high-quality and affordable child care and youth programs continue to be workforce issues with direct impact on mission readiness.

Over the past year, we have tackled important issues for Air Force families, including expanding child care capacity, increasing child care support for Guard and Reserve families, improving financial readiness, and providing opportunities for children of Airmen whether they reside on military installations or in civilian communities throughout the United States.

We continued to increase available, affordable, high-quality child care spaces for Airmen. Thanks to the temporary legislative authority for child care projects, the "Growing Child Care Spaces" initiative funded 18 construction projects to increase available child care by 1,242 spaces. Seven additional military construction projects were approved, which will further increase child care spaces by 1,718. We funded 7 additional facilities through the economic stimulus package and will produce 836 more spaces as a result. When all funded construction is complete, projected to be done in fiscal year 2011, our known child care space deficit will be eliminated. We will continue to closely monitor these projects to ensure our families' needs are met. Our next challenge will be to renovate or replace the aging infrastructure at child development and youth centers already in existence.

DEPLOYMENT SUPPORT

Recognizing the importance of our military communities and families, we continue to tailor programs to meet the needs of single and married members and their families impacted by multiple deployments on both the home front and the front line. Programs and services offered across the three phases of the deployment cycle -- pre-deployment, deployment/sustainment and reintegration/reunion -- help Airmen and their families identify and resolve concerns related to deployment.

At the home station, information and referral services are offered directly to spouses and families. This past year, pre-deployment briefings for 100,000 members and families armed them with information and resources to prepare for extended separations, with special emphasis on personal, professional and legal matters. During deployment, Airmen and their families stay connected through access to free morale calls designed to increase communication and decrease a sense of isolation. Our Airman and Family Readiness Centers conduct workshops and activities with family members during the sustainment phase which help them address issues around financial stability, parenting solutions and stress management. More than 22,000 spouses

received reintegration briefings this year, helping them understand changes during deployment, and gave them the opportunity to address those changes and plan ways to improve the quality of the reunion and reintegration.

Communication and life skills workshops were attended by more than 15,000 family members, and 24,000 requested and received financial counseling. More than 40,000 spouses received employment assistance to prepare them for portable careers. Although stressors associated with longer and multiple deployments may begin to wear on Air Force families, services and resources are at their disposal to help address their concerns. We continue to explore new and more effective ways to ease the trials on our families.

On the front line, the Airman and Family Readiness Center at a deployed location in Southwest Asia provided more 8,100 consultations last year. Keeping both single and married deployed Airmen in touch with their families provides an emotional link to family and friends back home. Some of the most requested services by deployed members were financial management, family reintegration, and personal and work life issues. Accessibility to morale phones, computers, and live video feeds allows deployed Airmen to make frequent contact with families and friends.

MILITARY CHILD EDUCATION

Air Force families include 145,000 children ages 6 to 18 years. These children typically move six to nine times from elementary school through high school. Academic standards, promotion and graduation requirements, services for children with special needs, eligibility for sports and extracurricular activities, and transfer and acceptance of credits and courses vary greatly from state to state and district to district. While these are not new issues, national emphasis on quality education and higher standards for admission to many post high school education and training institutions increase the stakes for military children. In addition, the

added stress of family separation due to deployments has combined with transition issues to increase the need for providing information and support to military families.

Under our new family structure which combines our child and youth programs with our Airman and Family Readiness Centers, progress in institutionalizing support for Air Force connected students attending public, private, DoD Dependent Schools, home and on-line schools has been made. Overseas, Air Force bases locally fund school liaisons and 12 stateside installations fund these positions as well. Other Air Force bases use their staff in the Airman and Family Readiness Centers to provide school liaison support as a collateral duty with other family support services. Despite limited funding, major commands and installations work creative initiatives such as providing webcasts of graduations so parents can share these occasions while deployed. Additionally, a senior military officer or DoD civilian has been designated to attend local school board meetings to advocate for the interests of Air Force families.

We sponsor training for staff working education issues in conjunction with the Military Child Education Coalition. We partner with the Army and Navy to offer training to schools near co-located installations. We continue to strengthen our partnerships with the National Military Family Association, Military Impacted Schools Association, Military Child Education Coalition, Department of Defense Education Agency, the other Services, and the Department of Education, in a concentrated effort to ease the tough challenges that face military students and their families.

SUPPORT FOR WORKING SPOUSES

Today, many spouses work outside the home. While many spouses seek the fulfillment of professional careers, others must work to meet their families' financial demands, making spouse employment and career development opportunities crucial for recruitment and retention.

Air Force programs provide spouses with knowledge and skills to develop and maintain a successful career within the framework of the mobile military lifestyle. We work with local community employers to raise awareness on the value of hiring military spouses. Airman and

Family Readiness Centers provide classes and individual consultation on career planning and all phases of the job search as well as assistance with on-line resources and access to computers.

We are also working with the DoD to support spouse employment initiatives through programs such as Spouses to Teachers and My Career Advancement Account (CAA). My CAA provides up to \$6,000 for our spouses to put toward education, licensure, certification, and continuing education for a portable career. We are closely watching the progress of implementation for the Executive Order on Spouse Federal Hiring Authority that will allow managers in all federal agencies to hire qualified military spouses through a military spouse preference program.

The Air Force Aid Society (AFAS) sponsors a Spouse Tuition Assistance Program which grants up to \$1,500 for spouses stationed overseas to defer the cost of college tuition and augments the Spouse Employment Training Program. AFAS also funds up to \$10,000 to Airman and Family Readiness Centers to develop programs that assist spouses with requirements for portable careers. So far in 2009, 32 grant proposals have been approved across the Air Force. Participants will train in medical transcription, pharmacy technology, computers, nursing assistance, and special needs education.

CHILD AND YOUTH PROGRAMS

Significant progress has been made this year toward helping Airmen and their families balance the competing demands of parenting and military service. Readily available, high-quality and affordable child care and youth programs continue to be a workforce issue with direct impact on mission readiness.

The Expanded Child Care program provides 16,000 hours of child care each month to assist Airmen who require additional child care support during increased shifts, deployments, or when they work in excess of a normal duty day. The Returning Home Care program supports

Airmen returning from a 30-day or longer deployment in support of contingency operations with 16 hours of free child care.

To ensure child care is affordable when a space is unavailable at the child development center or school age program, the Family Child Care Subsidy program provides an average subsidy of \$142 per child per month in Air Force Family Child Care homes.

Our partnership with the Air Force Aid Society in the Give Parents a Break program provides several hours of free child care each month to parents who are dealing with challenges inherent to military life, including deployments, remote tours of duty, and extended hours.

We also continue to expand the Home Community Care program, reducing out-of-pocket expenses for Air Reserve Component members by providing free in-home quality child care during drill weekends. The past year has seen significant expansion to new locations, with a total of 43 participating family child care homes in 37 locations across 26 states typically not near active duty bases. The program offered more than 57,000 hours of child care last year, with 24,000 hours provided in off-base, civilian contracted homes during Unit Training Assembly weekends. We proudly sustained outstanding youth development opportunities for Air Force children, from elementary school through high school. Providing support for geographically-separated families has been an area of focus this year, and partnership opportunities have allowed us to reach additional families living in civilian communities and on active installations.

The European Keystone Summit and associated camps developed in partnership with the National Military Family Association provide residential youth camps during the summer. More than 25,000 Air Force youth participate in camps designed to help them achieve their potential, develop self-esteem, and build resistance to negative pressures.

We focus on fitness through Air Force FitFactor, a program designed to promote healthy lifestyles through physical activity and healthy eating selections for youth ages 6 to 18 years.

We reach more than 15,000 youth each year. Our new Air Force FitFamily initiative will roll out in 2010 and allow families to register as a team to enhance family fitness and wellness.

Additionally, our Air Force has made great efforts to expand or create fitness programs for parents and families. Most fitness centers have a family-oriented fitness room and programs that allow parents to exercise with their children. For example, at Ramstein Air Base in Germany, fitness professionals create and support programs such as Mommy and Me, Yoga for Kids and aerobics with strollers. These and other initiatives allow families to participate in outdoor adventure activities, libraries, clubs, and community centers, providing an outlet for families experiencing stressors and connecting them to other military families.

EXCEPTIONAL FAMILY MEMBERS AND SPECIAL NEEDS

As is the case across America, some Air Force families have special needs family members within their households requiring specialized care or treatment. To identify gaps in necessary services for these families, the Caring for People forum brought together more than 200 Air Force behavioral specialists, chaplains, family advocacy personnel and other family support professionals to focus on issues on deployment, families, schools, special needs, Guard and Reserve families, and single Airmen. The top 11 initiatives briefed to senior leadership included development of a special needs family support program, a social networking plan for military families such as on Facebook, expansion of family support resources for Air Guard and Reserve, expansion of schools support functions, and a focus on single Airmen.

The Air Force identified an emerging need to standardize support and advocacy for families enrolled in the Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP). We have a long-standing and successful process for identifying families and facilitating personnel moves and assignments based on their families' requirements. However, we have determined the need for a companion program to provide families support as they move from location to location. With more 14,000 families enrolled in the EFMP, it is important that each move does not have an adverse effect on

their family or career. We are actively engaged in creating a comprehensive program that offers these families consistent support and reassurance through their moves, extended or repeated deployments, and throughout their military career.

ASSISTANCE TO SEVERELY INJURED SERVICE MEMBERS

We have an unwavering obligation to provide care and assistance for seriously wounded, injured or ill Airmen. Our Family Liaison Officers extend support to families of fallen and combat-wounded Airmen, as well as to families of all seriously-injured Airmen who are receiving medical treatment away from their home unit. Family Liaison Officers provide a wide variety of assistance including local transportation, lodging arrangements, assistance with benefits, and referral to various agencies available to assist wounded warriors, their families, and families of fallen heroes.

Last year, we began the Air Force Recovery Care Coordinator program to be the single point of contact to assist seriously injured, ill, and wounded Airmen through the non-clinical aspects of their recovery. Our Recovery Care Coordinators work directly with hospitalized Airmen to develop individualized recovery plans that contain goals and a record of non-clinical assistance provided to our Airmen. Also available to assist these wounded, ill or injured Airmen are the Federal Recovery Care Coordinators (FRC). Airmen referred to the FRC are usually those with catastrophic injuries or illness who need multiple transitions among treatment facilities to care for their medical problems. The FRCs coordinate this care, and assist with access to benefits from all agencies and from the private sector.

Our Air Force Wounded Warrior Program staff keeps in contact with our medically-retired wounded Airmen for a minimum of five years post retirement and provides a wide-range of assistance, including employment and benefits counseling and referral to a variety of agencies designed to assist wounded veterans. New Air Force policies offer opportunities for them to regain a career path with the Air Force, compete for promotions, and receive priority retraining

opportunities if they are no longer qualified in their Air Force Specialty Code. For wounded Airmen with disability ratings of 30 percent or greater and who elect medical retirement or can no longer stay because of their wounds, the Air Force will facilitate offers of civil service positions.

SUMMARY

Again, we thank you for your continued support of our Airmen and their families. Both at home and abroad, these Airmen and their spouses and children are incredible ambassadors for our nation.

They make many sacrifices for our nation. Our families go above and beyond to provide the support and care needed for our Airmen to complete the mission of defending our Nation, its interest and ideals. Their strength, courage and ability to overcome adversity are inspiring.

Our spouses and children watch as their loved one, their hero, is sent into harm's way. I have watched as they wipe the tears away, pick up the extra work load, and press forward with the life they have taken on and keep the home fires burning. These very same families are heroes in their own right. They miss their Airman on holidays and special occasions. They miss their Airman while gathered around birthday cakes, an anniversary table set for two but seated by one, and even a simple board game in the family room. Their children look over at that empty chair in the stands before throwing out a fast ball at the little league game. Yet when the deployment or the day is done, it's our Air Force families who welcome their hero home and back into the fold of family life.

These are only some of the reasons why it is imperative we continue taking care of our Air Force families. Our Airmen have incredible demands placed upon their shoulders as they answer our Nation's call to serve. These Airmen care very deeply for this Great Nation of ours. We as a nation need to do everything we can to care for the families who care for our Airmen.

Thank you and God Bless the United States of America.

DOCUMENTS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

JULY 22, 2009



Statement of
The Fleet Reserve Association
On Support for
Military Family Programs
Policies and Initiatives

Submitted to:
Military Personnel Subcommittee
Committee on Armed Services
United States House of Representatives

July 22, 2009

THE FRA

The Fleet Reserve Association (FRA) is the oldest and largest enlisted organization serving active duty, Reserves, retired and veterans of the Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard. It is Congressionally Chartered, recognized by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) as an accrediting Veteran Service Organization (VSO) for claim representation and entrusted to serve all veterans who seek its help. In 2007, FRA was selected for full membership on the National Veterans' Day Committee.

FRA was established in 1924 and its name is derived from the Navy's program for personnel transferring to the Fleet Reserve or Fleet Marine Corps Reserve after 20 or more years of active duty, but less than 30 years for retirement purposes. During the required period of service in the Fleet Reserve, assigned personnel earn retainer pay and are subject to recall by the Secretary of the Navy.

FRA's mission is to act as the premier "watch dog" organization in maintaining and improving the quality of life for enlisted Sea Service personnel and their families and FRA is a leading advocate for them on Capitol Hill. The Association also sponsors a National Americanism Essay program, awards over \$90,000 in scholarships annually and provides disaster and/or relief to shipmates and others in distress.

The Association is also a founding member of The Military Coalition (TMC), a 34-member consortium of military and veteran's organizations. FRA hosts most TMC meetings and members of its staff serve in a number of TMC leadership roles.

FRA celebrated 84 years of service in November 2008. For over eight decades, dedication to its members has resulted in legislation enhancing quality of life programs for Sea Services personnel, other members of the Uniformed Services plus their families and survivors, while protecting their rights and privileges. CHAMPUS, now TRICARE, was an initiative of FRA, as was the Uniformed Services Survivor Benefit Plan (USSBP). More recently, FRA led the way in reforming the REDUX Retirement Plan, obtaining targeted pay increases for mid-level enlisted personnel, and sea pay for junior enlisted sailors. FRA also played a leading role in advocating recently enacted predatory lending protections for service members and their dependents.

FRA's motto is: "Loyalty, Protection, and Service."

**CERTIFICATION OF NON-RECEIPT
OF FEDERAL FUNDS**

Pursuant to the requirements of House Rule XI, the Fleet Reserve Association has not received any federal grant or contract during the current fiscal year or either of the two previous fiscal years.

SYNOPSIS

The Fleet Reserve Association (FRA) is an active participant and leading organization in the Military Coalition (TMC) and submits the following FRA specific information for this hearing.

INTRODUCTION

Madam Chairwoman, the Fleet Reserve Association salutes you, members of the Subcommittee, and your staff for scheduling a separate hearing on programs for military families. Military deployments create unique stresses on families due to separation, uncertainties of each assignment and associated dangers of injury or death for the deployed service member. Further, adapting to new living arrangements and routines adds to the stress, particularly for children.

Fortunately men and women in uniform continue to answer the calls to support repeated deployments – but only at a cost of ever-greater sacrifices for them and their families. Now more than ever before the support of their families is essential to enduring the mounting stresses of the war effort and other operational commitments. This stress has resulted in doubling the number of outpatient mental health visits (1 million in 2003 to 2 million in 2008) for children with an active duty parent.¹ That is why FRA supports the provision in the Defense Authorization bill (HR 2647) that requires DoD to report on how DoD can develop additional training programs to assist service members to become licensed mental health providers.

On Memorial Day President Obama said “The nation will honor the service of our troops and the sacrifice of their families... Our fighting men and women – and the military families who love them – embody what is best in America. And we have a responsibility to serve all of them as well as they serve all of us.”² FRA fully concurs, and notes that the President’s FY 2010 budget increases funding for family support programs by \$263 million, for a total of \$2.1 billion. The programs listed in this statement are critical to providing support for military families as they endure a family member deployed overseas.

CHILD CARE

Child development and youth programs help military families balance the competing demands of mission readiness and family responsibilities. This was discussed by senior enlisted leaders of the Navy, Marine Corps, Army and Air Force during a February 4, 2009 Quality of Life hearing by the House Milcon/VA Appropriations Subcommittee.

¹ Military.Com [More Troops’ Kids Seeking Counseling](#) Associated Press, July 8, 2009

² American Forces Press Service; [Obama: Spirit of Memorial Day Must Extend Beyond Actual Observance](#) May 26, 2009

The Navy's top concerns according to the newly appointed Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy (MCPON) Rick West include availability and affordability of child care for Navy families. And according to Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps Carlton Kent the Marines Corps' top concerns include adequate end strength for the conflicts of today and tomorrow; increased emphasis on family readiness and helping Marines and their families deal with the stress of the operational deployment cycles.

The Department of Defense (DoD) goal is to achieve 80 percent of the potential child care need which is sufficient capacity to place children from waiting lists within one to three months after care is requested. That goal has not been met. The Marines Corps has only achieved 64 percent and the Navy has achieved 72 percent with a corresponding three to six months placement. However, placement wait times in fleet concentration areas are usually longer. A recent FRA online military child care survey indicates that 39 percent of respondents found access to a military child care center to be "very difficult" and 27 percent found access to be "somewhat difficult." Additionally the survey found that 26 percent of respondents were either "very or somewhat dissatisfied with care." The survey was based on responses from 118 military families with children. The availability of child care remains a top issue among dual-income families and single parents. FRA welcomes the \$276 million in the FY 2009 war supplemental to provide 25 more child care centers for more than 5,000 kids. In total Congress has provided funding to construct or expand over 90 child development centers since 2008, but more needs to be done.

REDUCE LENGTH AND FREQUENCY OF DEPLOYMENTS

Inadequate end strength requires active duty and Reserve personnel to be deployed too long and/or too frequently and this is taking a toll on service members and their families. The Association is concerned about calls by some legislators to reduce planned force growth as a means of funding weapons programs. The past seven years of war have shown that there is no substitute for having an adequate number of troops available to complete the mission. Although there is an anticipated reduction of troops in Iraq, that change will be offset by an increase in the number of troops sent to Afghanistan. That is why FRA advocates for a Department of Defense (DoD) Budget that is at least five (5) percent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to ensure adequate funding for both people and weapon programs.

BAH

The Association can not stress enough the importance of providing service members and their families the opportunity to live in suitable, affordable, and safe housing. This critical quality of life benefit is of paramount concern for service members deployed far from home who must know that their family is in an appropriate living environment.

FRA's January/February 2009 online survey of enlisted active duty personnel indicates that 93.3 percent believe that adequate Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) rates are "very important" and housing allowances tied with pay as the most important quality of

life programs. The need to update the standards used to establish BAH rates is clear since only married E-9s now qualify for BAH based on single family housing costs. The Association, while thankful for the BAH increases in the FY 2010 budget, continues to advocate for legislation authorizing more realistic housing standards, particularly for career senior enlisted personnel. FRA hopes that the DoD study to review the standards used to calculate the monthly rates for Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH), mandated in the House version of the FY 2010 Defense Authorization bill (HR 2647), will demonstrate the need for BAH rates that accurately reflect the real cost of housing for military families.

POV IMPROVEMENTS

Title 10, Section 2634 authorizes military personnel to ship only one privately owned vehicle outside the continental United States. Service members can drive the second vehicle to Alaska and be reimbursed for their expenses up to the authorized government travel rate.

FRA believes that allowing service members to ship a second POV to US Territories, Alaska, and Hawaii, as called for in the House version of the NDAA (HR 2647) would enhance the quality of life for families stationed overseas and would reflect modern day practicalities requiring a family to own a vehicle for work and a second for spouses who work or other family requirements.

Today 54.6 % of military personnel are married.³ According to the US Census 54 percent of US families have both husband and wife in the workforce. However, 60 percent of active duty enlisted spouses are in the workforce and 10 percent are actively looking for work.⁴ A growing trend in marriages is the two income family and the current policy discourages military families in need of two vehicles while serving overseas.

Current DoD policies negatively impact military families by requiring them to:

- 1) Sell their vehicle usually at a loss and buy another vehicle, usually at a loss.
- 2) Ship a vehicle at the service member's own expense.
- 3) Alter their lifestyle to reflect the fact that they could not afford a second vehicle for transportation.

Further creating an internship pilot program for military spouses to obtain employment with federal agencies, that is provided in the House Defense Authorization bill (HR 2647) will provide spouses career opportunities that are portable as the family moves from duty station to duty station while providing more stability to the family that would otherwise be forced to be supported by only one source of income.

³ DoD Community and Family Readiness Report 2005, Page 26

⁴ Ibid, page 46

SUPPORT FULL FUNDING FOR THE IMPACT AID PROGRAM

The Department of Education must have adequate Impact Aid funding to reimburse local school districts for educating military children. The DoD budget must also include sufficient funds to provide support for highly impacted school districts and the DoD school system. FRA appreciates the supplemental funding in both the House and Senate versions of the FY 2010 Defense Authorization bills (HR 2647/S.1390).

MILITARY MOMS

A family member being deployed is always stressful for others in the family, and there can be additional stress when it is the mother that is being deployed. Women are being deployed overseas in greater numbers than ever before, making up about 16 percent of the 3.5 million members of the U.S. armed forces and 10 percent of U.S. forces in Iraq and Afghanistan.”⁵

A recent study on military deployment of women with children ages 10 – 18 indicates that the longer the deployment, the greater the effect on health and behavior. The study indicates that 36 percent of women had no primary parent in the home during deployment (single parent or both parents were deployed). The study found that longer deployments increased negative behaviors for children including a drop in school grades, poor nutrition, and decreased exercise. The “Military Women’s Perceptions of the Effect on Deployment on their Roles as Mothers and on Adolescent Health” study by Lt. Col. Mona Ternus, also indicates that risk behavior for children jumped 75 percent during and after deployment. That is why FRA welcomes the additional money for family advocacy included in the FY 2009 supplemental spending bill, which provides families with access to child psychologists.

FAMILY CARE GIVERS NEED SUPPORT

FRA believes that more needs to be done to assist full-time care givers and family members who also have significant additional needs.

The unfortunate truth is that, for the most severely injured service members, family members or other loved ones are often required to become full-time care givers. Many have lost their jobs, homes, and savings while caring for these wounded warriors.

Under current law, Traumatic Servicemembers Group Life Insurance (TSGLI) can provide some offset for immediate expenses for some wounded warriors with qualifying TSGLI wounds/injuries, and authorized care givers are provided per diem payments while the member remains on active duty. But those payments stop when the member

⁵ Washington Times [Military Moms Toughing it Out](#) Marjorie Musick, May 18, 2009

leaves active duty status. While the VA provides severely disabled veterans a modest allowance for aid and attendance, it is payable to the veteran, not to the care giver. Further, it is authorized only for spouses, but care givers are often parents, siblings or other loved ones.

The FRA believes that the government has an obligation to provide reasonable compensation and training for such care givers, whose own well-being, careers, and futures may be disrupted by military-caused injuries to a service member who is a loved one or member of their immediate family.

In addition, Congress should authorize health coverage and reasonable respite care for full-time caregivers and their family members, recognizing that they often have no other options for care and need periodic relief from their often demanding duties. FRA supports the provision in the Senate's FY 2010 Defense Authorization bill (S. 1390) that provides special compensation for designated care givers.

Many wounded warriors have difficulty transitioning to medical retirement status. To assist in this process, consideration should be given to authorizing medically retired members and their families to remain in on-base housing for up to one year after retirement, in the same way that families are allowed to do so when a member dies on active duty.

CONCLUSION

FRA is grateful for the opportunity to present these recommendations to this distinguished Subcommittee to support military families. The Association expresses gratitude for the extraordinary progress this Subcommittee has made in advancing a wide range of military personnel benefits and quality-of-life programs for all uniformed services personnel, their families and survivors.

**WITNESS RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS ASKED DURING
THE HEARING**

JULY 22, 2009

RESPONSE TO QUESTION SUBMITTED BY MR. WILSON

Master Chief Petty Officer WEST. One specific area we could use your help and support is military spouse employment, of particular interest in these times of high unemployment. Efforts to address streamlining state-to-state certification and licensure in health services, education, financial services and potentially other occupational areas would be most beneficial as spouses frequently move between states with their service members. Also, opportunities to market military spouses to nationwide employers within Congressional districts could provide local solutions to corporate hiring needs while adding visibility to our spouse workforce.

Current funding levels are meeting program requirements. [See page 13.]

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS POST HEARING

JULY 22, 2009

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MRS. DAVIS

Mrs. DAVIS. Can each of you explain to the committee how the Department, or your individual Service, evaluates family support programs to determine whether they are meeting the needs of the families? What sort of process does your Service or the Department go through in order to validate the effectiveness and quality of the programs that are being provided? How are feedback from users (i.e. family members/dependents) incorporated into these evaluations?

Mr. MYERS and Colonel LYMAN. The Department values ongoing, systematic Service member and family research and evaluation, especially critical in these times of change, to help guide us in best serving families. Along with social science research on families and quality of life issues, we have relied on three major sources of data over the past several years to help us understand the needs of families.

- 1) Active Duty Spouse Surveys (2006 and 2008) cover a wide range of quality of life issues, including financial well-being, effects of deployments on children, spouse employment and education, and feelings about military life. The surveys provide the richest source of data we have to date about how families are faring across all the services.
- 2) Three Status of the Forces Surveys a year poll Active Duty service members on their overall satisfaction with the military, retention intentions, perceived readiness, stress, tempo, and permanent change of station moves. Two surveys of the Reserve Components are also conducted each year. These surveys allow us to track trends and changes in the quality of life of Service members and their families. A rotating set of questions covers quality of life issues, including financial well-being, impact of deployments on children, use of services and programs like Military OneSource and Morale, Welfare and Recreation and family support.
- 3) In May 2000, the Department funded the Military Family Research Institute at Purdue University to conduct basic research on quality of life in military families, with particular emphasis on implication for job satisfaction, performance and retention.

In recognition of the increased burden placed on Service members and families during the Overseas Contingency Operation, the Department has made family readiness a high priority and has redesigned and boosted family support. Use of support programs has expanded as the programs respond to the needs of our military families. The Department has recently completed its first report to Congress on Military Family Readiness Policy and Plans, in accordance with NDAA 08 Section 581. The report addresses goals and measurement systems associated with family support programs in some detail.

Developing outcome measures remains a work in progress due to the difficulties in applying meaningful measures to a military family's readiness. In many areas, insufficient data exists to directly link program benefits to outcomes for military families. For example, outcome data on various service programs that assist military spouses with employment goals has been difficult to systematically collect as the Services have different delivery systems and different data collection methods. Standardizing and collecting program outcome measures will be a priority of research in coming years.

Mrs. DAVIS. Can each of you explain to the committee how the Department, or your individual Service, evaluates family support programs to determine whether they are meeting the needs of the families? What sort of process does your Service or the Department go through in order to validate the effectiveness and quality of the programs that are being provided? How are feedback from users (i.e. family members/dependents) incorporated into these evaluations?

Sergeant Major PRESTON. In fiscal year 2004, the Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation command instituted an aggressive Army Community Service (ACS) Accreditation program. This comprehensive evaluation consists of over 190 standards which establish baseline metrics for common levels of service delivered within our military communities. As part of this extensive review, ACS staff, volunteers, and

customers participate in interviews with accreditation team members. Their input is used to validate findings and identify areas for improvement.

In October 2007, the Army unveiled the Army Family Covenant as its commitment to provide Soldiers and their Families—Active, Guard, and Reserve—with a quality of life commensurate with their level of service and sacrifice to the Nation. The Army has aggressively improved a broad range of Family-oriented, quality of life programs to standardize services, increase accessibility to health care, improve Soldier and Family housing, ensure excellence in schools, youth, and child services, and expand education and employment opportunities for Families. The Army has made significant progress, but there is still much to do.

As the Army Family Covenant nears its second anniversary, senior leaders want to know if improvements and investments in programs and services meet the needs of Soldiers and Families. We are conducting a series of town hall meetings at seven of our largest installations to meet with Family Readiness Group leaders and members to gather first-hand information from those most affected by deployments about how well the Covenant is meeting its commitments. Results from the town halls will guide further program and service improvement strategies.

We also measure the effectiveness of Army support programs by regularly surveying Soldiers and Families to seek opinions, assess satisfaction, and most importantly, monitor adaptation to the unique challenges of Army life. These trends help us match the capabilities of Army programs to the expectations of our Soldiers and Families—keeping the Army strong, ready, and resilient.

Finally, the Army's customer-centric tool to communicate issues important to Soldiers and Families is the Army Family Action Plan (AFAP). The AFAP gives Soldiers and Families (Active and Reserve Component) a voice in shaping their standards of living by allowing them to identify and elevate issues and concerns to senior leaders for resolution. Although most issues can be resolved at local level, issues elevated to HQDA have resulted in 112 legislative changes and 159 policy changes. The AFAP also gives the Army leaders an assessment of how well deployment and Family support is working.

Mrs. DAVIS. Can each of you explain to the committee how the Department, or your individual Service, evaluates family support programs to determine whether they are meeting the needs of the families? What sort of process does your Service or the Department go through in order to validate the effectiveness and quality of the programs that are being provided? How are feedback from users (i.e. family members/dependents) incorporated into these evaluations?

Sergeant Major KENT. The Marine Corps uses Functionality Assessments (FA) as the internal program review process to maximize program efficiencies and ensure effectiveness. FAs are conducted in three phases, which include the evaluation of current programs (i.e., As-Is analysis); Benchmarking, a comparison of best business practices; and "To-Be" development. The "As-Is" phase is based on the information provided by the installations through a data call. During the "Benchmarking" phase, a professional firm is contracted to conduct an objective bias free study of like processes employed by our Sister Services and select public and private organizations. The As-Is and Benchmark information provide the basic tools and resources needed for the third and final phase, "To-Be". This phase is conducted as a week-long Working Group comprised of installation program specific subject matter experts and management, as well as headquarters program sponsors. Common deliverables achieved through the conduct of FAs include:

- Mission validation and identification of critical requirements.
- Redefining or refining core functions and tasks to establish an acceptable minimal level of service Marine Corps-wide.
- Adoption of best practices identified in the benchmark study.
- Development of common terms and definitions to help ensure data integrity, and to increase opportunities for benchmarking across the Corps with industry.
- Identification of standard IT systems for data collection, admin, and modernization of service delivery.
- Development of standardized staffing models based on defined metrics.
- Development of performance measures to help determine program effectiveness and to quantify contribution to positive military outcomes (recruitment, retention, readiness).

To-date, the Marine Corps has completed 24 FAs that encompass over 50 programs and support functions. The Functionality Assessments are also supported by customer surveys that capture invaluable data from a representative sample of the Marine Corps' demographic. Additional national-level research efforts are used to

capture customer feedback and guide Marine Corps planning and programming decisions; most notably the Quality of Life (QOL) in the Marine Corps Study. The Marine Corps administered the fourth iteration of QOL Study during the 2007 time-frame. The Study results are instrumental in tracking and reporting Marine and spouse perceptions of QOL in a wide variety of life areas, such as housing, compensation, and healthcare to marriage, friendships, and children.

Mrs. DAVIS. Can each of you explain to the committee how the Department, or your individual Service, evaluates family support programs to determine whether they are meeting the needs of the families? What sort of process does your Service or the Department go through in order to validate the effectiveness and quality of the programs that are being provided? How are feedback from users (i.e. family members/dependents) incorporated into these evaluations?

Master Chief Petty Officer WEST. Navy family readiness programs and services are systematically evaluated through several mechanisms. To meet the DoD requirement for triennial inspection of all military family centers, Navy Fleet and Family Support Programs (FFSP) implemented in 1994 an Accreditation Program. Accreditation provides detailed analyses of program operation, to include identification of strengths and areas for improvement. It also provides an external, objective marker that the program meets accepted standards for organizational function and quality of service, and it ensures regulatory requirements are met in each management function and program area offered. The Navy Child and Youth Program (CYP) also conducts unannounced annual inspections by qualified Navy child development specialists, and partners in comprehensive accreditation programs with the National Association for the Education of Young Children for Child Development Centers and the Council on Accreditation for school-aged care.

In addition to Navy accreditation processes, Sailors, family members, and command participants are surveyed on a recurring basis by installation Fleet and Family Support Program (FFSP) personnel to determine the effectiveness and quality of services offered. Programs are adapted accordingly in response to feedback about what does and doesn't work.

Mrs. DAVIS. Can each of you explain to the committee how the Department, or your individual Service, evaluates family support programs to determine whether they are meeting the needs of the families? What sort of process does your Service or the Department go through in order to validate the effectiveness and quality of the programs that are being provided? How are feedback from users (i.e. family members/dependents) incorporated into these evaluations?

Chief Master Sergeant ROY. The United States Air Force conducts a biennial Community Assessment where military members and their families are polled directly for their opinions about the effectiveness of family support and other quality of life programs. Information gathered from the Community Assessment is tabulated, reviewed and developed into a community action plan at the installation, major command and headquarters levels. In addition, individual installations are empowered to conduct focus groups and local needs assessments surveys to gauge their specific community needs. Once assessed, the community action plans are standardized for base implementation so families cross the Air Force are offered similar services. In addition, specialized programs are developed to meet unique needs. For instance, programs are developed based on unique needs, like an overseas assignment or a specific mission. To augment these forms of feedback, the Air Force also contracts assessment teams to independently survey the effectiveness of our programs.

Mrs. DAVIS. The Department of Defense standard appropriated funding requirement for youth programs is 65 percent. Do you believe that this level of appropriated funding is sufficient to ensure that these important programs are being provided to families? Should the Department and Congress consider increasing the appropriated funding support to higher level for family and youth programs, especially during these difficult times for military families?

Mr. MYERS and Colonel LYMAN. The Department is fully committed to providing a high quality of life for military members serving our Nation and their families. These programs are lifelines of support for families, especially children and youth, who are stationed around the globe. Our commitment includes providing strong youth programs and services through adequate funding, strict oversight, continual staff development and strong family involvement.

Current minimal funding for appropriated funds (APF) support for family and youth programs is 65%, however the Services are spending well over that amount. For example, in 2008 the Army spent 93.4%, Navy 74%, Air Force 70%, and Marine Corps 88% of APF.

The effects of eight years of war on military children, youth and their families have taken its toll. Recent studies have found that a significant number, (approx-

mately 32%), of military youth, whose parents are deployed during wartime, may be at "high risk" for psychosocial problems which can include learning disorders; developmental disabilities; and emotional, behavioral and psychosomatic problems (msnbc.com and NBC News, updated 6:00 p.m. ET, Thurs., Aug. 13, 2009). Furthermore, research also shows a direct correlation between the levels of support receive and a lowering of risk levels.

DoD appreciates the focus and attention Congress has placed on military youth programs. We continue our commitment to meet these expectations and share the passion for improving services to support military children, youth, and families.

Mrs. DAVIS. The Department of Defense standard appropriated funding requirement for youth programs is 65 percent. Do you believe that this level of appropriated funding is sufficient to ensure that these important programs are being provided to families? Should the Department and Congress consider increasing the appropriated funding support to higher level for family and youth programs, especially during these difficult times for military families?

Sergeant Major PRESTON. The Army continues to support the standard funding level of 65 percent Appropriated Funding (APF) which is sufficient to ensure the delivery of the Youth Programs. As part of the Army Family Covenant, the Army increased APF support in fiscal year 2009 for Youth Programs to mitigate the stressful effects placed on our Families due to eight years of persistent conflict. This increase has allowed the Army to expand youth programming to include outreach services for geographically dispersed youth, to offset fee discounts for youth sports and instructional programs for children of deployed Soldiers, to provide transportation support to allow youth to participate in after school activities, and to offer extended operating hours for youth centers that mirror the extended duty day in support of parental mission requirements.

Mrs. DAVIS. The Department of Defense standard appropriated funding requirement for youth programs is 65 percent. Do you believe that this level of appropriated funding is sufficient to ensure that these important programs are being provided to families? Should the Department and Congress consider increasing the appropriated funding support to higher level for family and youth programs, especially during these difficult times for military families?

Sergeant Major KENT. The Marine Corps appreciates the on-going support of Congress to address funding requirements for important family support programs. Although DoD policy establishes 65% as the minimum standard for funding MWR Category B programs (includes child and youth programs); the policy does allow 100% APF support for all authorized expenditures. For FY08, the Marine Corps MWR Category B funding was reported at 83%, which was an approximate \$41M increase in total APF spending from FY07. This included baseline and supplemental funding expenditures. Beginning in FY10, CMC has directed a \$110M increase to the family support baseline budget, which will help solidify efforts to transition programs to a wartime footing.

Mrs. DAVIS. The Department of Defense standard appropriated funding requirement for youth programs is 65 percent. Do you believe that this level of appropriated funding is sufficient to ensure that these important programs are being provided to families? Should the Department and Congress consider increasing the appropriated funding support to higher level for family and youth programs, especially during these difficult times for military families?

Master Chief Petty Officer WEST. Since youth programs have a limited ability to generate revenue from user fees and programs are often provided free of charge to encourage participation, the minimum funding requirement of 65 percent is appropriate. The remaining 35 percent is covered by non-appropriated programs. This percentage split does not limit the amount of appropriated dollars Congress can authorize for family and youth programs. Current funding levels are meeting program requirements.

Mrs. DAVIS. The Department of Defense standard appropriated funding requirement for youth programs is 65 percent. Do you believe that this level of appropriated funding is sufficient to ensure that these important programs are being provided to families? Should the Department and Congress consider increasing the appropriated funding support to higher level for family and youth programs, especially during these difficult times for military families?

Chief Master Sergeant ROY. The Air Force operates over 82 Child and Youth programs world-wide and serves approximately 68,000 military dependents under the age of 18. Activities focus on five core program areas: Character and Leadership Development, the Arts, Youth Sports, Fitness and Recreation, Health and Life Skills, and Education and Career Development. The School Age program includes before and after school care, care on school holidays and during the summer months, specialty and summer camps, and part-day preschools for parents of children aged 5-

12 years. The Air Force Youth Camping Program offers a wide variety of summer camp opportunities in both residential and specialty camps and serves over 20,000 children of military members. Mission Youth Outreach is a partnership between the Air Force and the Boys & Girls Club of America that provides one-year free membership for youth to attend any Boys & Girls Club in their community.

The 65% funding requirement for Child and Youth Programs sustains basic program operating costs and allows for partial replacement of equipment. Increased funding would allow for initiatives directly targeting children of deployed members, augmentation of existing programs with specialized positions that help families deal with deployment-specific issues and family relocations, and enhance existing relationships with the Air Force partners like the Boys & Girls Clubs of America and 4-H.

The Air Force is committed to serving Airmen and their families by reaching out and assisting all members of the Total Force through robust child, youth and family programs, wherever the member resides.

Mrs. DAVIS. One of the constant challenges for many family support programs is the lack of staff and constant turnover. What can be done to address this issue?

Mr. MYERS and Colonel LYMAN. Staff turnover is an on-going issue in family support programs especially overseas where many staff are military spouses who relocate every few years when their sponsor is reassigned. Turnover is an expected issue and one that is weighed against the benefit of military spouses' career opportunities, experience, and ability to adapt to changing situations. Many military spouses who begin their federal careers overseas go on to similar jobs in CONUS locations. The Services report stateside family support programs do not show higher levels of staff turnover than other programs. Turnover is expected and steps are taken to employ relocating staff at the next duty station, thereby reducing the effects of staff turnover.

The military Services have taken steps in recent years to improve recruitment and retention of support staff within their family programs and lessen the negative impact of turnover by increasing recruitment efforts, offering incentives, and reorganizing programs. Several of the Services have changed the manner in which they provide family support and have done away with the traditional "stove-piped" service delivery system where each staff member specializes in one program area. In the new delivery system, staff are cross-trained to provide services in several program areas. This concept works to lessen the impact of staff turnover by ensuring continuity and program knowledge and experience is not lost when a person leaves.

Another effort to recruit and retain quality staff is in the area of payment and incentives. For child and youth programs, pay is fixed across the Department with increases based on successful completion of training and adequate performance. Child and youth programs typically offer educational incentives such as payments for college courses.

Additionally, the Department has partnered with the 106 institutions which make up the public Land Grant University system to provide training and professional development for Military Community and Family Policy and family programs staff. One such effort is the Capitol Region Child Care Laboratory School—this model professional development program provides hands-on training in a military child or youth program setting linked to a university laboratory school and its faculty expertise. This Lab School will provide services for families while serving as a learning laboratory for students and professionals to enhance their training in child development, family support, and administrative management. The program will assist program efforts in enhancing professional development, as well as improve the overall quality and functioning of staff.

Another program that will address recruitment and retention of military family program staff is the 4-H Military Internship Program, collaboration between the Department, the United States Department of Agriculture, and the Land Grant University system. This Internship Program will recruit upper level undergraduate and graduate students to work within DoD programs such as child development centers, youth programs, and other family support programs.

Mrs. DAVIS. One of the constant challenges for many family support programs is the lack of staff and constant turnover. What can be done to address this issue?

Sergeant Major PRESTON. The Army Family Covenant in 2007 provided funding for an additional 477 positions for our 83 Army Community Service (ACS) centers worldwide. Until these positions are authorized in fiscal year (FY) 2010, the Army is using a bridging strategy of contractors and over hires to deliver the required services. These positions will bring ACS centers to the standards established by the 1999 US Army Manpower and Analysis Agency staffing requirements. This will increase our base staffing in ACS centers by approximately one third (from 1,071 to 1,414). We are currently reviewing additional manpower requirements for FY12 to

address current new missions acquired, without additional resources, since the 1999 manpower surveys.

Many of our Family Program positions are filled with military spouses. As Soldiers move, so do their spouses. While this turnover is challenging, we believe that the opportunities for professional positions in portable careers within the military community for our Families is a huge quality of life advantage.

Mrs. DAVIS. One of the constant challenges for many family support programs is the lack of staff and constant turnover. What can be done to address this issue?

Sergeant Major KENT. In 2007, the CMC took deliberate action to establish civilian family readiness officers and family support trainers. This action was necessary as much of the work prior to 2008 was performed by volunteers. Beyond these program areas, we have significantly increased our Exceptional Family Member Program and established a School Liaison Program. Our strategy for retention is to ensure competitive salaries appropriate to the position. However, it must be acknowledged that military spouses predominantly fill these positions at present. Therefore, we expect turnover to be high. While regrettable, the talent and expertise of military spouses allows these individuals to quickly acclimate to employment on another installation reducing effects of turnover.

Our remaining challenge has been associated with family support programs that have been contracted out over time. Recent changes in OSD policy and Congressional direction for in-sourcing of contracts have presented an opportunity to, upon appropriate business case analysis, discontinue contracts at appropriate timeframes and establish nonappropriated fund personnel who are government personnel and salaries reimbursed by appropriated funds. We expect this action will have two significant benefits: (1) stabilize our staffing and resolve long-term vacancies and (2) return ownership and flexibility directly to the program and evolve services to meet our mission. At present, flexibility is greatly restricted due to contract terms.

Mrs. DAVIS. One of the constant challenges for many family support programs is the lack of staff and constant turnover. What can be done to address this issue?

Master Chief Petty Officer WEST. There is no known data that shows family support programs have a level of turnover that is higher than any other Navy program. We take pride in hiring military spouses and therefore it would be reasonable to assume that this practice would result in a higher level of turnover than non-Navy programs. However, losing a trained spouse from one location due to transfer often means the ability to hire a fully trained staff member at the next duty location. With respect to recruitment, we are proactive in identifying positions that can be virtual, preventing a break in service for the spouse when the active duty member is transferred. In addition, we encourage alternate work schedules where appropriate as a workforce incentive; maximize the family programs network in recruitment; and utilize Facebook technology as a recruitment tool.

Mrs. DAVIS. One of the constant challenges for many family support programs is the lack of staff and constant turnover. What can be done to address this issue?

Chief Master Sergeant ROY. Airman and Family Readiness Centers (A&FRCs) across the Air Force see approximately 15 percent turnover annually. A&FRCs combat this turnover percentage by staffing their centers with Community Readiness Consultants (CRCs). CRCs are trained to provide customer service in any program area under the A&FRC umbrella. The CRC concept abandons the traditional stove-piped service delivery system and allows each staff member to provide full spectrum support.

Mrs. DAVIS. Often when I meet with the Navy and Marine Corps ombudsmen in my district, one of the common concerns that I hear is the lack of access to funds that could be used to help reduce the financial burden on our volunteers or provide recognition for their service. Have the Services thought about providing appropriated funds to family support volunteers to help defray their costs? What would be the issues that need to be overcome to do so?

Mr. MYERS and Colonel LYMAN. Recognizing the vital role family readiness volunteers play in supporting Service members and their families is important. Volunteerism is essential to implementing military family support programs. Command-sponsored support groups run by volunteers range from informal to formal organizations of spouses and Service members' parents or significant others and meet social needs for camaraderie, companionship, information, and serve as a forum to relieve loneliness and stress during deployment or periods of family separation. They also play a vital role in communication between commanders and families.

Volunteer burnout and out-of-pocket expenses have been reported throughout military programs worldwide. While a robust volunteer network is crucial to support military families during times of deployment, we also acknowledge that more paid staff to support volunteers is needed. The Department is aware of the stress many of these dedicated volunteers are dealing with on a daily basis. The military compo-

nents continue to look for ways to increase support to volunteers and to provide them with additional tools and resources. The Army has increased spending to over \$45 million to hire 1,000 full-time staff to support the Family Readiness Program. The Marine Corps is spending \$30 million over two years to shift from volunteers to paid staff. The Department applauds the Services' efforts to assist volunteers by providing family readiness support to units down to the battalion level to help relieve some of the overworked volunteers. We understand more is needed.

While military commanders may not compensate volunteers for the services they provide, they may reimburse them from appropriated or non-appropriated funds for incidental expenses incurred in providing services, including but not limited to long distance telephone calls, commuting, and childcare.

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Sergeant Major PRESTON. The Army has made provisions to defray the costs incurred by volunteers in the conduct of their official duties. Army Regulations 608-1, *Army Community Service Center* and 215-1, *Military Morale, Welfare, and Recreation Programs and Nonappropriated Fund Instrumentalities* outline the use of appropriated and non-appropriated fund support for Family Readiness Group volunteers. These regulations provide detailed guidance for commanders and volunteers on how to obtain reimbursement for childcare expenses, mileage, telephone calls, and other appropriate expenses. Both regulations also address the use of funds to support awards and recognition ceremonies.

Since 2007, the Army has added over 1,000 paid Family Readiness Support Assistants (FRSAs) who, under the supervision of unit commanders, work solely to ease the burden on volunteer Family Readiness Group (FRG) leaders. FRSAs do not replace volunteer FRG leaders, but rather provide administrative and logistical assistance, allowing volunteer FRG leaders to concentrate on assisting Families. FRSAs may also liaise between the FRG leader and the rear detachment commander.

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Sergeant Major KENT. Reimbursement of volunteers for incidental expenses in support of their unit's personal and family readiness program or in support of training programs provided by Marine Corps Family Team Building has been a top priority for Marine leaders prior to the development and implementation of the new Unit, Personal and Family Readiness Program. Such incidental expenses include mileage, telephone calls, tolls, parking, and childcare. These types of expenses are authorized for reimbursement using either appropriated funds or non-appropriated funds. Funding for volunteer reimbursement is subject to reasonable limitations established by Commanders as there may be competing requirements to consider. Currently, Marine Corps units located aboard Marine Corps installations are only authorized non-appropriated funds to support the personal and family readiness program, which includes volunteer reimbursements. Non-appropriated funding is the more available, flexible and usable type of funding for personal and family readiness events.

Mrs. DAVIS. Often when I meet with the Navy and Marine Corps ombudsmen in my district, one of the common concerns that I hear is the lack of access to funds that could be used to help reduce the financial burden on our volunteers or provide recognition for their service. Have the Services thought about providing appropriated funds to family support volunteers to help defray their costs? What would be the issues that need to be overcome to do so?

Master Chief Petty Officer WEST. Although Ombudsmen do not expect a salary, the Navy recognizes that serving as a command volunteer should not result in financial hardship and that Ombudsmen do occasionally incur expenses during the performance of their duties. Many of the expenses are authorized for reimbursement by OPNAVINST 1750.1F, 5.d(8), and such reimbursement is the responsibility of the commanding officer. Ombudsmen with children, ages 0-12, performing official duties are authorized child care through the Navy Child and Youth Programs at no cost.

Commanding officers must provide appropriate funding resource support to the Ombudsman Program. The funding line item to support the Ombudsman Program

may use appropriated funds (APF) or non-appropriated funds (NAF). Based on a survey of 1,389 Ombudsmen in October 2007, 80% responded that they have no difficulty receiving reimbursements.

Recognition of Ombudsmen is vitally important, and commands are encouraged to show their appreciation in a variety of ways using non-appropriated funds. While Ombudsman Appreciation Day is 14 September, through ongoing interaction, commands regularly show Ombudsmen their service is valued through appreciation dinners, ombudsman plaques and awards.

Mrs. DAVIS. Often when I meet with the Navy and Marine Corps ombudsmen in my district, one of the common concerns that I hear is the lack of access to funds that could be used to help reduce the financial burden on our volunteers or provide recognition for their service. Have the Services thought about providing appropriated funds to family support volunteers to help defray their costs? What would be the issues that need to be overcome to do so?

Chief Master Sergeant ROY. Appropriated funds must be used for mission essential tasks. Appropriate funds are only available to help recognize volunteers who help carry out official Air Force functions. Nonappropriated funds and private organization funding is typically used to provide funding to recognize the contribution of volunteers.

Mrs. DAVIS. When we think of military families, most think of the spouse and children. However, not all service members are married, but yet their families—mothers, fathers, siblings may need similar support services when a single service member is deployed. What is the Department and the Services doing to support the families of single service members?

Mr. MYERS and Colonel LYMAN. The Department provides information and referral services and resources to parents of service members through Military OneSource 24/7, 365 days a year.

The Military Services provide information and referral and resources to family members including parents and siblings before, during and after return of a member from deployment. Information about the resources is provided during pre-deployment outreach and workshops; through command newsletters and e-messaging; through outreach from rear detachment staff and/or family programs during deployment; and during reintegration and post-deployment workshops and training. Additionally, the Services invite parents to participate in Family Readiness Groups during deployment.

Mrs. DAVIS. When we think of military families, most think of the spouse and children. However, not all service members are married, but yet their families—mothers, fathers, siblings may need similar support services when a single service member is deployed. What is the Department and the Services doing to support the families of single service members?

Sergeant Major PRESTON. The Army uses many service delivery mechanisms to inform all Soldiers (single and married) and immediate or extended Families on available services and programs. Army OneSource (www.armyonesource.com) is a focal point for information delivery, which provides accurate, up-to-date information on a variety of topics for Active Duty, Guard, and Reserve Soldiers and Family members. In fiscal year 2008, Army OneSource had more than 20 million hits per month. The Family Program Newsletter, a monthly update of topics related to Family readiness, is e-mailed to more than 75,000 subscribers who sign up at Army OneSource.

Family Readiness Groups (FRGs) provide a critical link between extended Families, Soldiers, and units before, during, and after deployments. FRG membership is open to Soldiers, civilian employees, and immediate and extended Family members (parents, siblings, fiancées, and other loved ones designated by the Soldier). Virtual FRGs provide all the functionality of an FRG in an ad-hoc, online setting to meet the needs of geographically dispersed units and Families. The eArmy Family Messaging System is another tool for commanders to deliver messages through multiple devices such as phone, cell, text, PDA, and fax.

Mrs. DAVIS. When we think of military families, most think of the spouse and children. However, not all service members are married, but yet their families—mothers, fathers, siblings may need similar support services when a single service member is deployed. What is the Department and the Services doing to support the families of single service members?

Sergeant Major KENT. Today, the Marine Corps Family is defined as more than just the traditional nuclear family definition of parents and children. Marines, their spouses and children, by default, should always be the primary focus of family readiness support. However, we readily acknowledge the role extended family members may play in fostering personal and family readiness, for both single and married Marines. Our Unit, Personal and Family Readiness Program was developed to be

inclusive of this valuable support resource. Single Marines and supported sister-service members may now designate up to four contacts to receive official communication from their command and have access to the information and referral support provided by the unit Family Readiness Officer and the enhanced training opportunities. Additionally, we are in the research and development phase for the design of our organizational communication system, which will facilitate all-way communication for Marines, spouses and designated/extended family contacts and provide a portal for authorized users to access information on services available across a spectrum of programs. This endeavor is the capstone to implementing the Commandant of the Marine Corps' Guidance to "Improve the quality of life for our Marines and our families," with the specific goal of "Ensuring our Family and Single Marine Programs have fully transitioned to a wartime footing in order to fulfill the promises made to our families."

Mrs. DAVIS. When we think of military families, most think of the spouse and children. However, not all service members are married, but yet their families—mothers, fathers, siblings may need similar support services when a single service member is deployed. What is the Department and the Services doing to support the families of single service members?

Master Chief Petty Officer WEST. All Sailors, to include single Sailors, have access to services provided at Fleet and Family Support Centers, to include deployment support, relocation assistance, clinical counseling, sexual assault and domestic abuse victim advocacy, personal financial management, life skills education, and transition assistance.

We engage a single Sailor's preferred point of contact during an IA assignment or the designated caregivers of seriously wounded, ill and injured single Sailors. We otherwise provide information to family members of single Sailors through our family support website, command Ombudsman program, and recently launched a Fleet and Family Support Programs Facebook page. Military OneSource and Military Homefront websites, as well as the Joint Family Support and Assistance Program, provide resources and information which are beneficial for family members of single service members.

Depending on geographic location, extended family members are invited to attend family day events, deployment briefings, family readiness group events, and Returning Warrior Workshops, which are signature events of the Navy Reserve Reintegration (Yellow Ribbon) program.

Mrs. DAVIS. When we think of military families, most think of the spouse and children. However, not all service members are married, but yet their families—mothers, fathers, siblings may need similar support services when a single service member is deployed. What is the Department and the Services doing to support the families of single service members?

Chief Master Sergeant ROY. Since Operation Desert Storm, Hearts Apart (HA) is a vital element of deployment readiness activities hosted by the Airman & Family Readiness Centers (A&FRC) to help families stay connected to Airmen. Hearts Apart activities focus on deployment support for Airmen & families during pre-deployment and sustainment. HA also includes support to families separated due to extended TDY lasting 30 days or more and to families whose Airman is on a remote assignment. A&FRC offer a baseline of Hearts Apart services to aid families in feeling connected to the Air Force community. Morale Calls through base operators allow Airmen and their family members to connect through the Defense Switching Network (DSN) at a rate of 1 call per week for 15 minutes. Discovery Resource Centers allow computer access with webcams for family members to uplink with Airmen at deployed locations and some have video teleconferencing capabilities. Air Force Aid Society (AFAS) Community Enhancement Programs such as Give Parents a Break and Car Care Because we Care provide free child care and car safety checks.

One hundred percent (100%) of Airmen are required to receive a pre-deployment briefing from the A&FRC at which time they identify family members left behind. Although some services are limited to family members enrolled in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System, support may be extended simply through a newsletter, email, or phone call to parents, siblings, or significant others. At the briefing, all Airmen are asked by A&FRC personnel to identify family members or significant others that may require assistance or information during a deployment. A&FRC personnel distribute information and maintain monthly contact with family members or significant others in multiple ways. Outreach focuses on face-to-face meetings at community events for family members of deployed Airmen.

The Air Force is currently working on Caring for People initiatives that examine closely and enhance the support we specifically provide to single Airmen.

Mrs. DAVIS. Mr. Myer, given the recent survey data from DMDC on the impact of deployments on children, is the Department of Defense undertaking any longitu-

dinal studies on this issue that may be able to shed more light on what is needed to assist families under the stress of constant and extended separations due to the continued combat deployment of troops?

Mr. MYERS and Colonel LYMAN. The Department of Defense is launching a longitudinal component of the DMDC survey program in fiscal year 2010. A representative sample of Active Duty members and spouses will be followed over the next two years to better understand the stresses of deployments on families as well as the extent of existing support systems.

Mrs. DAVIS. Mr. Myer, the recent study on combat related deployment on school age children conducted by the National Institute for Child and Human Development looked at the impact of deployments on children from ages 6 through 12. However, a recent DMDC survey found that children most impacted were between the ages of 0 to 5 years old. Are there any additional studies being conducted that would look at this specific population of children and what sort of prevention and treatment models may be needed to support these children and their caretakers?

Mr. MYERS and Colonel LYMAN. In the 2008 DMDC Active Duty Spouse Survey, spouses did indicate their child most impacted by deployment was 0-5 (53%). While important to note, it is driven by the demographics of the sample, 59% of whom had children in that age group. The average age of the most impacted child as reported by the parent was 6.1 years old.

Boston University School of Social Work and the Boston Medical Center have received a four year grant from the Department of Defense (Army) to develop a family-based program to support the healthy reintegration of soldiers into their families. Designed for families with children ages birth to five years old, the goal of this home-based family program is to mitigate the impact of combat and separation-related stress upon the parent-child and family relationships.

Through Coming Together Around Military Families (CTAMF), ZERO TO THREE has provided training, consultation, and materials to 12 military installations and 2 medical centers around the nation; and provided support to several Joint Family Support Assistance Programs (JFSAP) as a means of addressing the unique needs of Guard and Reserve families. ZERO TO THREE contracted with the Military Family Research Institute at Purdue University to conduct a formal evaluation of the CTAMF trainings and anticipate having a final report in October.

Resources, prevention and treatment programs currently being implemented are:

- Child and Youth Behavioral Military Family Life Consultants (CYB-MFLC) provide support to children, parents, faculty, or staff at Child Development Centers, schools, and camps.
 - Support 151 child and youth programs on military installations.
 - During the 2009-2010 school year, 86 CYB-MFLCs will support 97 schools world-wide.
 - 30 CYB-MFLCs support Joint Family Support Programs in 30 states to serve families who are geographically isolated from installation services.
 - During the summer of 2009 more than 400 MFLCs are supporting more than 300 summer camps with approximately 24,000 children.
- Military OneSource provides face-to-face, electronic, and telephonic counseling on parenting/child issues and provides a myriad of other support and services to families.
- *Coming Together Around Military Families* is a Department partnership with ZERO TO THREE to help build awareness of the impact of separation, injury, and loss on families with babies and toddlers. This program provides direct in-service training to DoD helping professionals in the fields of mental health, child development, family support, and pediatrics.
- www.militarystudent.org is a website that offers an on-line course for educators and counselors to build their awareness of the impact of deployment and the military lifestyle to build systems of support.
- Military Child Education Coalition provides *Living in the New Normal* courses for stakeholders interested in supporting military children as well as *National Guard and Reserves Institutes*.
- *Parents as Teachers* is an internationally renown home visitation program deployed to high opstempo locations to support school readiness, identify special needs, and support optimum parenting skills.
- *Project FOCUS* (Families OverComing Under Stress) is a family-centered resiliency training program based on evidenced-based interventions that enhance understanding, psychological health and developmental outcomes for highly stressed children and families. FOCUS has been adapted for military families

facing multiple deployments, combat operational stress and physical injuries in a family member. In March of 2008, the Navy Bureau of Medicine and Surgery (BUMED) built a partnership with the UCLA Semel Institute of Neuroscience and Human Behavior to implement the FOCUS Project for United States Navy and Marine Corps families in order to address the impact of multiple deployments, combat stress, and high operational tempo on children and families. Through this unique collaboration, FOCUS services augment existing Navy Medicine and Navy and Marine Corps community support programs such as the Fleet and Family Centers and the Marine Corps Community Services in order to provide a comprehensive system of care that supports family readiness and wellness.

- *Military Families Learning Community*: The major goals of the Military Families Learning Community are: 1) Provide education and training to National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN) category II and III sites on a variety of military-related issues; 2) Provide consultation and technical assistance to NCTSN Category II and III sites to facilitate NCTSN sites' ability to provide trauma-informed, evidenced-based interventions to military families and children; 3) Identify key national and regional partnerships with NCTSN Category II and III sites, TRICARE, military treatment facilities, medical providers, and other federal, state and local partners, in order to provide a continuum and excellence of services for military families and children; 4) Extend knowledge and evidence based practices from NCTSN to larger community of providers to military families and children.

Mrs. DAVIS. Colonel Lyman, how are Reserve and Guard families being informed of programs and services available to them, particularly opportunities to participate in Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Programs. Are families being provided the resources to be able to travel to these events?

Mr. MYERS and Colonel LYMAN. The Yellow Ribbon Program provides support across the entire deployment cycle and the success of Yellow Ribbon Programs and Family Readiness Programs are essential for unit readiness. Commanders at the deploying-unit level are responsible to communicate these programs throughout their organizations.

The following resources help commanders communicate these programs:

- 1) Well-developed family programs that include trained volunteers and formal and informal communication networks (e.g.: the Navy Reserve's Fleet and Family Support Programs or the National Guard Family Program)
- 2) Unit and family program newsletters sent to members and their families
- 3) The Yellow Ribbon Program web-based event scheduling tool (www.dodyrrp.org) that allows Service members and their families to locate Yellow Ribbon events close to their homes. The scheduling tool opened on July 1, 2009.
- 4) Web-based tools that are advertised by the host Services and organizations that give families direct access to critical resources. For example:
 - Military OneSource at www.militaryonesource.com
 - DoD Military Community and Family Policy at www.militaryhomefront.com
 - National Guard Bureau at www.jointservicesupport.org/fp/
 - Organizations such as National Military Family Association at www.nmfa.org

Regarding family travel to Yellow Ribbon events, DoD policy requires the Services to budget for pay, allowances, and travel for members along with travel and allowances for an established number of family members (each service establishes its family attendance guidelines).

Mrs. DAVIS. Colonel Lyman, studies have shown that the deployments impact our military children, given the unique challenges faced by Guard and Reserve families, what are the Department and the individual reserve components doing to ensure that families have access to the services and programs that they need particularly mental health resources?

Mr. MYERS and Colonel LYMAN. The well-being of Guard and Reserve children is of great concern to the Department of Defense and numerous military and community resources are in place for support. Every Reserve component has established child and youth programs to ensure support services reach military families. Furthermore, with Guard and Reserve members living in over 4000 communities nationwide, military and community resources work in combination to serve the health and mental health needs of military children.

During and following deployment, Reserve component families have:

- Full access to TRICARE resources (and civilian employer insurance where applicable)
- Military OneSource available 24/7 for local access to masters-level, licensed therapists for up to 12 sessions per issue
- Military Family Life Consultants (masters-level counselors) available in every state

In addition, a variety of non-profit programs exist to provide support to RC families who are geographically dispersed. These efforts include, among others:

- Operation Military Kids (OMK) an organization that supports the children and youth impacted by deployment. OMK has reached 88,000 military youth and provided information to 21,009 community members across the United States
- Military Child Education Coalition (MCEC) is a non-profit, world-wide organization focused on military children affected by mobility, family separation, and transition ensuring they receive quality educational opportunities
- Children's Camps and Educational Opportunities have been established to reach out specifically to military children and youth. For example, National Military Family Association (NMFA) established and supports *Operation Purple* Camp which in 2009 will host nearly 90 weeks of camp in 62 locations in 37 states and territories. Purple camps have hosted over 20,000 kids since they started in 1994.

Mrs. DAVIS. Sergeant Major Preston, one of the issues that have been raised is the Army provides 16 hours of respite care to families of deployed soldiers, but the problem is that the child care facilities are fully subscribed and are unable to provide the hours to families. Can you tell us is this specific to a handful of bases or a system-wide problem?

Sergeant Major PRESTON. The Army has found no indication of a system-wide problem in offering 16 hours of respite child care (per child, per month) to the families of deployed Soldiers. While respite care in a Child Development Center (CDC) setting may not always be available "on demand" at every garrison, the Army has a wide variety of delivery methods beyond the CDC setting that allow the garrisons to meet the needs of most parents that wish to use it.

Deployment respite care has been a key benefit to mitigate the stress felt by Soldiers and Families as a result of frequent deployment. Deployment respite care is provided through multiple delivery options, in addition to child care centers, to include Family child care homes, on-site child care sessions, summer camps for school-aged children, child development homes, and trained babysitters. Since February 2008, over 1.1 million respite care hours have been provided across Army Garrisons making this service one of our best received offerings system-wide.

Mrs. DAVIS. Sergeant Major Kent, as you know, the Marine Corps and TriWest, the TRICARE contractor for the western region, have put together a pilot program to address the needs of autistic children at Camp Pendleton. Do you know the current status of this pilot program and are there any outcomes that may be useful as we seek to address support services for autistic children of military families?

Sergeant Major KENT. The "Enhanced Access to Autism Services Demonstration" project, which took effect in March 2008, is being administered through TRICARE and allows eligible beneficiaries to have access to a greater range of existing evidence-based Educational Interventions for Autism Spectrum Disorders (EIA) services, through an expanded network of educational intervention providers. Based on an informal survey, families at Camp Pendleton are aware of TRICARE's Demonstration project and are accessing its services. Nevertheless, we believe that even with the enhanced plan, current TRICARE coverage is insufficient for complete ASD medical services, particularly Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA).

Mrs. DAVIS. Master Chief Petty Officer West, the Navy has a significant population of Individual Augmentees deployed. What efforts has the Navy taken to provide the necessary support to their families that are no longer part of a ship or unit or may be geographically separated from a base?

Master Chief Petty Officer WEST. The Individual Deployment Support Program begins 60 days prior to deployment and continues 180 days post deployment. An Individual Deployment Support Specialist (IDSS) from the Fleet and Family Support Center (FFSC) initiates contact with the IA Sailors and their family within 10 business days of receipt of a new file. Recurring contact, assessment and support, at an interval requested by the family, is provided by an IDSS and Command IA Coordinator. Support includes contact either by phone or in person, assessment of family needs, discussion of available family support programs and services nearest to the

family, facilitated referrals to nearby services, if requested, and mailing of IA information and materials. Efforts to reach remotely located families impacted by non-traditional duty assignments include using information technology to provide virtual IA family discussion groups and workshops, publishing a monthly family newsletter and IA Family Handbooks. When practical, deployment support programs and services have been adapted and provided specifically for family members of individual deployers. To date, FFSC Individual Deployment Support Specialists have served over 26,200 families of individual deployers.

Command Ombudsmen are trained on the unique challenges and issues faced by families of Individual Augmentees and geographically dispersed families. As trained volunteers, Command Ombudsmen serve a vital two-way communication link between command leadership and family members providing personalized support and guidance to families adapting to the challenges of a mobile military lifestyle and extended operations necessary to meet the Navy's maritime strategy. There are currently over 2,200 registered Navy Family Ombudsmen. Fleet and Family Support Centers provide training, consultation, coordination and support to Ombudsmen.

The Navy Reserve Psychological Health Outreach Program provides two Outreach Coordinators and three Outreach team members to each Reserve Region (for a total of 25). These coordinators and team members provide outreach, support, and intervention to returning reservists and their family members to mitigate existing stressors and to address future concerns. The newly established DoD Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program provides Reserve Component (RC) Service Members and their families support through all phases of the deployment cycle. The military services are sharing information regarding their deployment support programs so that RC personnel and families can attend events as close to their residence as possible. We are also using resources provided by Military OneSource, Joint Family Support and Assistance Programs, and the State National Guard Family Program Offices to deliver this critical information to our remotely located families.

Mrs. DAVIS. The Army and Marine Corps recently began to hire paid family support personnel to assist with administrative support. Does the Navy have similar paid support personnel to help with your programs? If not, why has your service chosen not to support paid family support personnel?

Master Chief Petty Officer WEST. The primary focus of the Navy Family Ombudsman Program is command communication, information, and referral. Ombudsmen are trained volunteers that liaison between commands and their families to keep the command informed regarding the overall health, morale, and welfare of command families. The program is designed to improve mission readiness through family readiness. A strong command Ombudsman Program ensures that families have the information necessary to meet the challenges of a military lifestyle.

All Ombudsman Coordinators are paid positions that provide administrative support to commands and Ombudsmen. The support includes scheduling Ombudsman Basic Trainings and Advanced Trainings, and working with the local Ombudsman Assembly. They also coordinate and track training records for Command Ombudsmen, assist with the development of email and telephone trees, develop and maintaining rosters, and ensure that command and Ombudsman information is updated in the CNIC Ombudsman Registry.

The Navy Preparedness Alliance (NPA) consists of five major commands that oversee the vast majority of programs affecting Sailors and their families. The principle NPA members are US Fleet Forces Command, Bureau of Medicine and Surgery, Chief of Naval Personnel, Chief of Reserve Forces and Commander Navy Installations Command. Their July meeting they assigned the NPA Working Group a task to conduct a Business Case Analysis (BCA) on the feasibility of hiring Family Readiness Advisors (FRA). The FRA would help in readiness and deployment support, dissemination of information and referral, serve as a command's official communication to family members, and they would provide commands assistance in volunteer management.

The Marine Corps Family Readiness Officer Program (FRO), a paid position, differs from the Ombudsman program, in that FROs have a higher level of responsibility within the command. In addition to serving as the liaison between the command and families they also manage, coordinate, and promote all matters pertaining to family readiness. As the primary point of contact concerning unit family readiness, the FRO is the subject matter expert for readiness events, conducts unit commander briefings, and ensures directives regarding family readiness posture are current.

Mrs. DAVIS. Chief Master Sergeant Roy, how does the Air Force get information out to its families that may need support, particularly those families who may not live on a base or who was sent as an individual augmentee to a theatre of operation?

Chief Master Sergeant ROY. Our main vehicle for getting information to Airmen's families is the Airman and Family Readiness Center (A&FRC). While the center is focused on Airmen who are deploying, including individual augmentees, services are available to any Airman assigned to a particular base, including those who live off base. If they are unaware of A&FRC services prior to deployment, they will become aware because attendance at the A&FRC predeployment briefing is mandatory for all deploying Airman. At the briefing, all Airmen are asked by A&FRC personnel to identify family members or significant others that may require assistance or information during a deployment. A&FRC personnel distribute information and maintain monthly contact with family members or significant others in multiple ways. Outreach focuses on face-to-face meetings at community events for family members of deployed Airmen.

A&FRCs take extra care to pinpoint whether the family will remain in the surrounding military community or choose to temporarily relocate to be near their familial support systems. Families are connected with the Airman & Family Readiness Center nearest to their location during the deployment.

Mrs. DAVIS. The Army and Marine Corps recently began to hire paid family support personnel to assist with administrative support. Does the Air Force have similar paid support personnel to help with your programs? If not, why has your service chosen not to support paid family support personnel?

Chief Master Sergeant ROY. The Air Force executes family readiness group responsibilities through numerous programs, including the Key Spouse program which has been successful through the support of volunteers and Air Force members.

